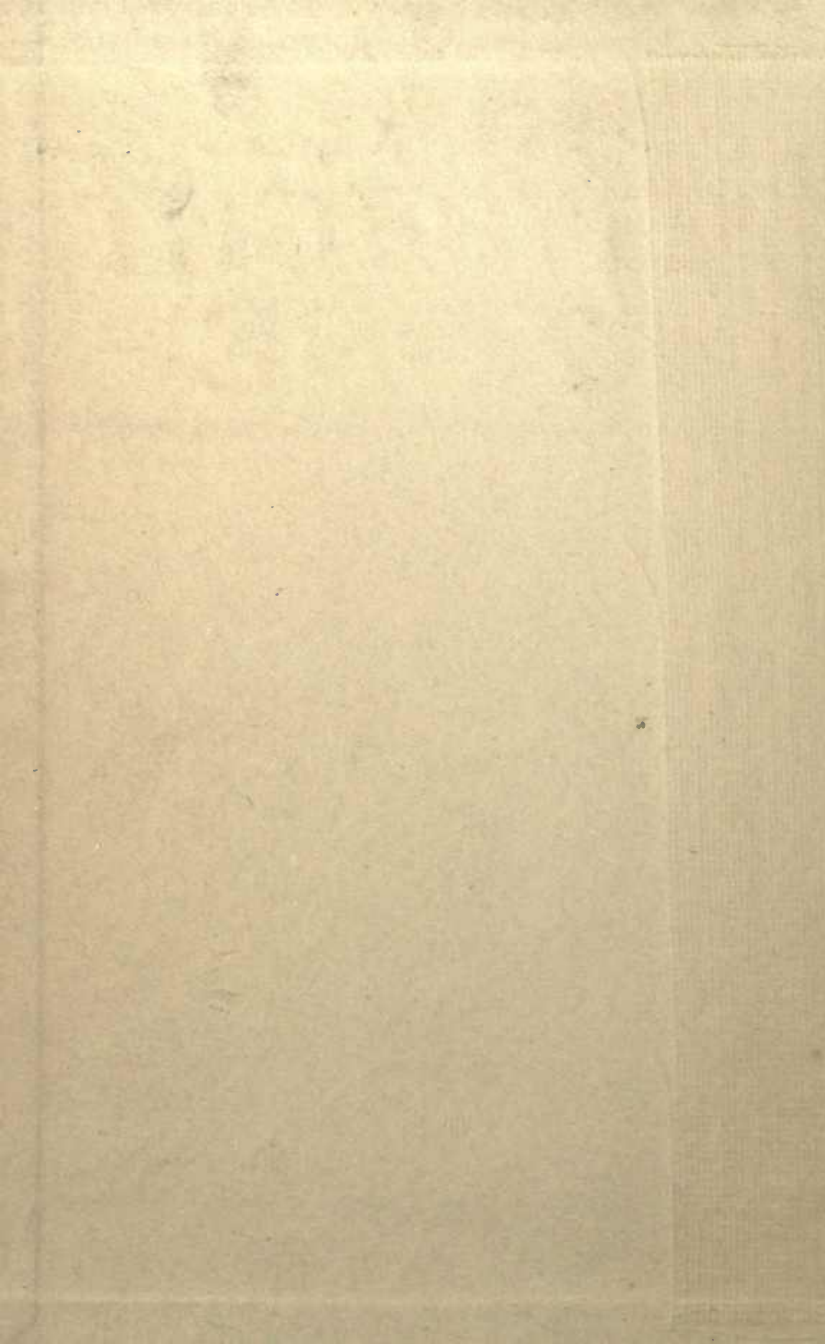


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# IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE



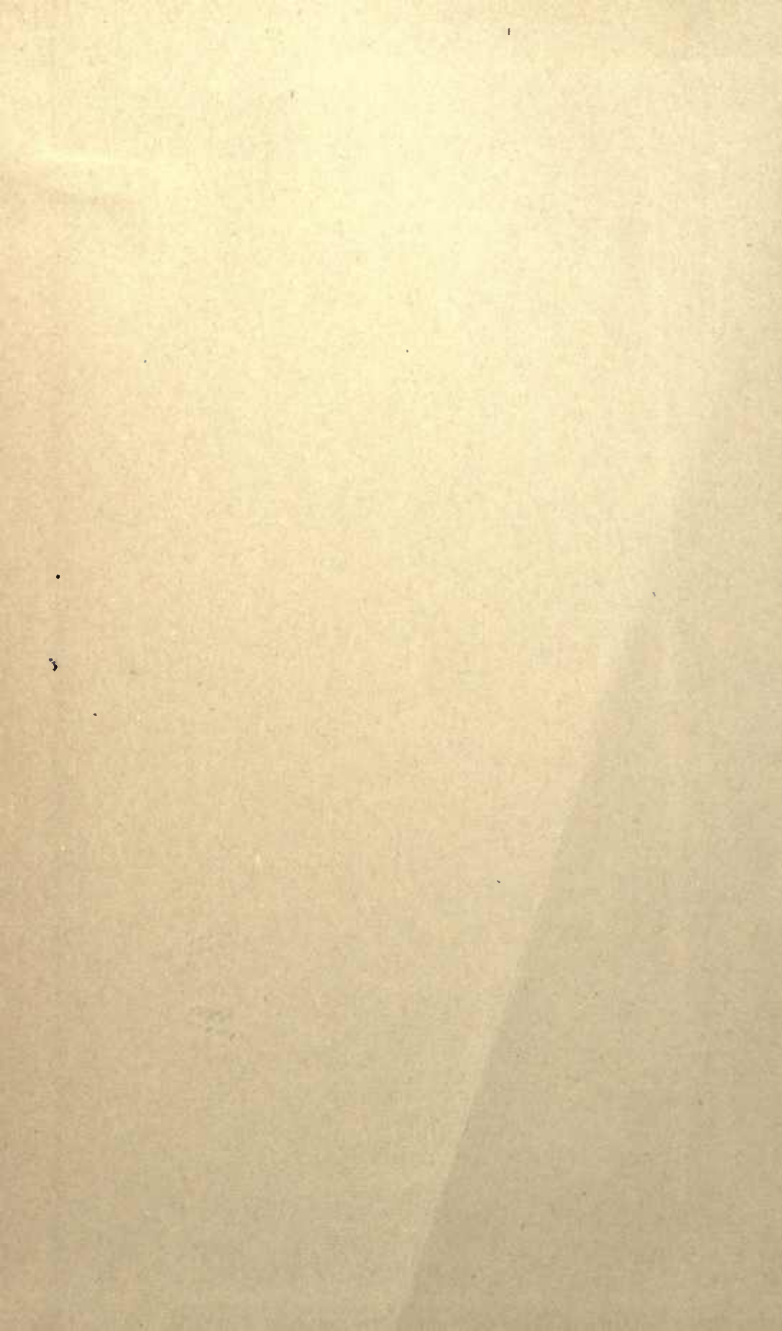
ROGER CAREY CRAVEN



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And then to both returned the vision of the little heaven  
on earth they so fondly contemplated.

# In the Twilight Zone

By  
ROGER CAREY CRAVEN



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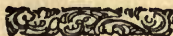
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## PROLOGUE

"WHAT do you think of your divine wench now, my foolish son, eh?"

"I may take her yet, father." The older man's face crimsoned with wrath.

"Then you need never call me father again," he said bitterly. "Think what an insufferable disgrace it would be to your whole family as well as to yourself. We could never put up with it. I would be compelled, much as I love you, to disown you. Your mother, lying in her grave—would you cast a reproach on her now that would poison her memory with all those who knew her in life, the saint that she was?"

"Was not Mary a very angel to my mother?"

"A very angel to your mother? She was your mother's maid and servant; a good one, I allow, doing always her duty as she ought, but still a maid and a servant—a slave, sir. And you remember what your mother herself said about this very thing, do you not? Now, see, the girl has a child—a thing excusable enough in one of the ordinary working women, perhaps, but something that one in Mary's position ought to have avoided. I suppose you would become father to the child, too?"

"I may take both Mary and the child," said the son firmly.

"Then curses would follow you all your life, and may they if you do that thing; but you shall not, for I will sell them both at once."



# IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE WINGED OMEN.

ABNER GARRETT was seated on his west porch, as was his wont at the close of a summer day. The sky, just beyond the tall beech woods that now shaded the large farmyard, was an unusual crimson, radiately streaked with shafts that seemed to be real flame.

It was a fancy passing through his mind for the moment that, as the day had been very hot, the sun had determined in departing, to set the parched old earth on fire and at length have done with it forever.

And then, thought he, what a spectacle it would be if every top leaf on every top branch of every tree in that sixty acres of woods should catch the heat and blaze up, a little taper! What magnificent candelabra! A forest for fairies then!

Suddenly a hawk on slow wing outlined itself against the fiery background of this sky and reached the central point in the luminous picture.

"And there the messenger," was Mr. Garrett's conceit, "to bring the brand for the kindling of the leaves."

The hawk came flying over the tree-tops and lowered

its flight over a stack of freshly thrashed straw that rose like a mountain of gold just this side the beeches.

Garrett started to his feet, for at nearer view the bird looked big enough to be an eagle, and little Bertha was playing about the straw pile. He had not time, however, to think that she might really be carried away or that she would be too heavy a burden for the largest of eagles. There was only time for him to feel that she was menaced and to be pierced with the fear that his darling was threatened with a danger from which he might not rescue her, for in an instant the hawk came flying straight forward and perched on the post of the garden gate.

The man observed this simple spectacle with surprise and then with alarm. He turned pale, went quickly through the open doors of the house to the kitchen and in a moment came out with a shotgun in his hand.

Mrs. Garrett followed close behind him, although he kept saying, "Stay back, Mary, stay back." She had never seen him use a gun and she knew by his strange look that he was acting under some extraordinary impulse. Therefore she would not heed his injunction to remain behind.

A rod from the door he reached a point where the smokehouse no longer kept the gate from view, and there he lifted the gun awkwardly to his shoulder. Mrs. Garrett, the instant she saw the mark, raised both her hands and cried frantically, "Don't shoot; don't shoot."



The frightened hawk flew rapidly away.

Garrett brought down the gun and turned towards his wife with a broad smile which, from being counterfeit, became in a moment nearly genuine, for, thinking at first only of concealing, if possible, his inward agitation, he had almost banished it, and passed with relief from the serious to the amusing features of the situation. The idea that he, who had never pulled a trigger in his life, should go all in haste to war on a hawk! As for capping the gun, he had never thought of that. And Mrs. Garrett was standing before him, ashamed, he knew, because she had given him for the first time anything like a command.

He knew, too, she was still clinging to that old superstition of hers.

Ah, if he could only have thought that amusing as well. But, as against her shame, he said, still smiling, "Never mind, Mary, never mind," and as against her superstition and her fear he repeated, with the smile gone and indeed with a tremor in his voice, "Never mind, never mind." The fear had returned to himself.

"Lucky you didn't shoot, Mr. Garrett," said his wife. "'T would only have made it worse. I wonder what'll happen," and she shook her head slowly and sighed.

"Nothing, Mary. Those things mean nothing."

"You acted as if you thought it meant something this time. Yo' just as scared as I am, and you know what's happened befo'."

Bertha had noticed the hawk plunging along like

an erratic cloud from the straw pile to the post. It was her nearest observation of any of the fowls of the higher air, and she came running after with all her might, full of curiosity to inspect this strange visitor at rest.

"No, he flew away again," Mrs. Garrett said to her. "You saw the hawk, didn't you, chile? But he didn't hurt you, did he, honey?"

Garrett regarded the child solemnly and with a look of wondrous tenderness, but said nothing. He put the gun in its place in the kitchen and returned to his chair on the porch.

"Why did I pay any attention to it?" he asked himself, though it was probably plain enough to him why he did; "and why did I try to shoot it and so let her find out it was there?"

This, possibly, was not quite so plain. Yet he found little comfort in thus questioning himself and so implying at least that there was a mystery as to both points and therefore as to his whole action in the matter.

He then became more frank with himself. He turned his face toward the front yard and looked at a spot in the corner where no tree was now but where one had stood a few years before. The very vacancy brought him a feeling of uneasiness and dread.

"It's all on account of that," he resumed. "If the hawk had stayed out where I first noticed him I would not have thought of it."

And yet he had often thought of it on seeing a hawk

or even a crow, because it bears general resemblance to a hawk, flying through the air or lighting on a limb.

"I might not have thought of it if the hawk had flown away somewhere else from the straw pile, but that it should come flying straight for me and then turn to light on the post so near the house and at this time of day—why did it act that way at the straw pile and what brought it to the post here at sundown?"

His mind was filled with the image of Bertha. Could it be that she was now overshadowed; that some evil fate had already, almost before she could talk, pointed thus its finger at her? Then a retrospect.

Seven years before, on a summer evening, Julia, his oldest child and then a young woman, lay bedfast in one of the front rooms of the house. Her father's affection for her was very great. They had been close companions since her days of infancy. He had observed with the proudest satisfaction and with a singular pleasure how she had grown into the admiration of all the friends of the family and how her beauty and her manners had come to be talked about in the whole neighborhood and by chance acquaintances. His means had permitted him to bestow upon her a thousand little luxuries not easily within the reach of other girls in the vicinity. Her dresses were richer. She had finer ornaments. Her riding pony was handsomer.

Once her father had presented her with a pretty side-saddle, but there was just one strap about it that she thought too coarse. He made all the haste of a

lover to change it, contriving some excuse to go to town for this sole purpose.

The few terms the girl spent in a boarding school in Cincinnati were seasons of considerable discontent and restlessness with her father, and her coming home was always a holiday with him.

He had not been much disturbed on account of her sickness until a physician "from town," whom the family doctor from a nearer village brought down with him one day, said something about quick consumption. Mr. Garrett feigned now and then to himself, to Mrs. Garrett and to others, to make light of this, but in fact the depth of his depression was extreme, and when he looked at Julia he imagined he could catch glimpses of the shadowy finger of an enemy disfiguring her fair face. And he could do nothing for her! He would leave the room in helpless agony.

But one day the doctor said she was better, and surely she was livelier and stronger than for many weeks. In the evening they had her sit, wrapped up in a big chair, just inside the front door. Mr. and Mrs. Garrett and the boys sat without on the porch. At sundown a hawk lighted in a small catalpa tree in the corner of the yard. Before the boys could work themselves slyly down the steps to the gravel walk to throw stones at it, it flew away.

"Oh, it means trouble," exclaimed Mrs. Garrett. "Something bad's going to happen."

"Nonsense, Mary," said her husband. "What makes you stick to that old notion?"



That night Julia had a hemorrhage and before dawn she was gone.

Garrett, when the end came, went out and looked through his tears for a long time at the still, shining stars, yearning to see among them the face of his angel.

A week after the funeral, and against the protest of his wife, who happened to learn what he intended to do and who told him it might provoke further ill, he with his own hands grubbed the tree out by the roots.

Garrett had not anticipated that Bertha would be a second Julia, but the little thing was pretty, bright and affectionate, and he found himself loving her much as he had loved Julia at her age.

When on this night of the second hawk the child sat on his knee, she was puzzled that he did not so promptly as usual answer the legions of questions which she kept marshalling up and that he did not undertake to tell her any story at all, but, child as she was, she noticed that he pressed her closer to him than at other times and held her little hand with a tighter grasp.

When all the others had gone to bed Garrett walked out through the little side gate into the farmyard. He went along a private roadway, flanked on one side by a fence, passed through two wagon gates, and entered by a well-worn path the beech woods.

South of the woods, and at the farther side, so that it might be reached by the highway that ran there, was a little graveyard. It did not contain more than three-quarters of an acre of ground. Garrett had set

it apart out of his own land for the use of the community and especially for the accommodation of the colored people who sometimes had difficulty in securing places in other cemeteries to lay away their dead.

At this time there were few graves here. One of them, and the only one with a marble headstone, was Julia's, and to this sacred spot Abner Garrett was going. He had often been there in the last seven years, but rarely when another was present. This night, climbing over the fence from out the woods, he hastened to the mound, and there he wept as he had wept before, and dropping on his knees, he so remained for a long time.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SILVER SERPENT.

ANOTHER summer evening. The dust lay deep on the road that ran in front of the house and wound around the bluff down to the bottom lands. The few who were on the highways, whether afoot, on horseback or in vehicle, were enveloped in dry clouds risen from the earth. The dilated nostrils of the horses that struggled up the long, steep hill were fringed with yellow slime. Everything out of doors had been sprayed with soil. Every leaf bore a thin covering of it. Not a blade of grass but was gritty with it. The full green on either side of the deeply-worn roadways had taken on a lighter hue from the yellow clay.

Though it was but early in July the summer had the appearance of being old, yet only a dash of rain would have restored all its beauty. Not a bird could put its foot on the roof without leaving its track, and the pigeons, as they lighted on the top of the big barn or the carriage house or the long corn bins, fanned up little storms of sand. Even the bees could scarcely have secured unadulterated pollen, and the "tiny masons building roofs of gold" must for once have become disheartened at the sight of their work. Indeed, all trees and shrubs and flowers seemed to have disappeared and to have left standing in their stead earthen-

modelled copies of themselves, wrought fine enough, to be sure, but lacking the freshness of life.

Only one fresh spot there was, and this the flower garden. Old Maggie visited it every morning and evening with the watering pot. Bertha was usually with her, for could not Bertha carry water in a dipper? These two were sisters of mercy to the delicate and perfumed denizens of this place, nor did they forget in their ministrations the plots by the front fence, where other roses grew, nor the parquets that bordered the front walk.

They had completed their pleasant task once more and were come to join the other members of the household on the west porch, for it was a habit with them all to sit there of an evening when twilight came on. Old Maggie, as usual, took a seat on the steps a little apart from the rest, and Bertha was sometimes sitting by her, sometimes frolicking about her, getting occasionally a reproof of mock severity when she threw an uncommonly big handful of grass into Maggie's hair or tickled her too harshly with one of the straws from that blessed new stack.

Maggie never had reproof of any serious kind or degree for Bertha. She was too much pleased with her childish attentions to speak out against a chance admixture of rudeness.

It was now dusk. All the doors of the house were open to admit whatever of freshness there might be in the evening air.

"Maggie, I s'pose that's Mrs. Anthony comin' for



her ice," said Mrs. Garrett, when the latch of the front gate, which could not be seen from where they were sitting, was heard to click. "I wonder how Henry is today. Give her a big piece, Maggie, it's so hot."

They were having typhoid fever at Anthony's, and had been getting ice from the Garretts to cool the tongue and brow of Henry. He was known in the neighborhood as "Shiftless Henry," a nickname first applied to him, and rightly enough, it was said, by Mrs. Garrett, because, being a tall, lean, bony, loose-jointed, easy-going fellow, he had the faculty of imparting to his work, even if at it for only five minutes, the character of himself. When a boy, his strings were always coming loose because he never tied the knots tight enough. He was twenty-two now, and had it not been for a more energetic younger brother, poor old Mrs. Anthony and Henry himself surely would have had a much sorrier time of it.

Old Maggie had risen to make a trip to the ice house and Bertha was dancing in expectancy of a piece of "cold candy," as Maggie told her it was, when, instead of the familiar Mrs. Anthony, a large man came striding heavily around the corner of the house, closely followed by two others. This was all that at first could be discerned.

"Some of the thrashers," said Mrs. Garrett in a low tone to the others. They were probably returning for a half-bushel measure or a neckyoke, perhaps, that had been forgotten.

But as the men came nearer it could be seen that



all were masked, and the first, besides, had a heavy, red beard, so that his features were absolutely concealed. Abner Garrett felt at once that rude business was on foot, for, besides the appearance of the men, he had in a flash remembered the hawk, and for the same reason Mrs. Garrett was frightened to the marrow of her bones.

"Good evening," said the first of the intruders gruffly.

"Good evening, gentlemen," answered Garrett in that deliberate and hesitating manner common when there is no recognition.

The son, Dan, was convinced that friends had come in disguise for a joke and was expecting every instant that they would pull off their masks and burst into a great laughter.

"Come up and sit down. We know you," said he confidently.

As the three men put their feet on the steps the leader lifted a revolver with the command:

"Now, all keep your places. Don't move and don't say a word."

His companions were now on the porch, one by Dan, and the other by one of the hired men, George. The leader himself was gazing directly and intently at Maggie.

"Humph," he exclaimed.

At this little Bertha drew away from Maggie and bounded to the side of Abner Garrett, clutching his sleeve in a paroxysm of terror. To her the "humph"

had been the grunt of some terrible beast that she had been told about in stories, and she could face the monster no longer.

The gentle Abner, whose soft ways every animal on the plantation knew and every human acquaintance marvelled at, was ready, when he felt the press of those little fingers on his arm, to spring like a giant, but Bertha's movement broke the spell that appeared to be holding the rough leader, who now ordered Maggie to sit down, and, quickly mounting the steps, held his revolver in front of Garrett's face.

"What do you mean?" demanded the planter, more as a protest than as a query.

"You won't have long to wait to find out. Don't move and you won't be hurt," he was answered.

"An outrage on me; an outrage on me, you brutes, whoever you are," cried Garrett, straightening himself in his chair.

"I say keep still," shouted the ruffian.

By this time, though there were but six of the robbers in all, the house seemed to be full of men. Footsteps were heard in every part of it. They were mingled with the indefinite sounds of confusion that came from the parlor, the sitting room and the dining room.

"Good Lawd, help us," exclaimed Mrs. Garrett.

In saying this she raised her hands, which were rudely seized and pushed back into her lap again.

"You low down white trash, you. How da' you!" cried the woman. This was the only way she knew of cursing. She had, however, never used the words

before. She had only heard them used by those who were angry.

"Be still," the ruffian commanded.

"Mary, we must do as they tell us," said her husband resignedly. "We are in their power and cannot help ourselves."

The villains inside were deliberate enough to light a lamp which they found on the mantelpiece. Mrs. Garrett started when the match was struck just inside the window before which she was sitting, and a glare of light which her shadow divided fell on the low railing and on the lawn below, but her alarm lest they were about to set fire to the house subsided when she heard the ill-adjusted chimney of the lamp break to pieces on the bricks of the fireplace.

Carried past another window, the flare of the lamp, which, with nothing to steady the flame, was now burning like a torch, fell full on Bertha. The light imparted a refined glory to her head. A singular beauty was given to her flaxen hair, setting off a face white with fear. It was pitiful to see how strained was every muscle of her hand in its grasp of her protector's arm. She could flee no further from the terrible looking man with the red beard and black face and such ghastly holes for eyes, for Garrett was always her last resort. In desperate cases he had never failed her. When her dolls were sick and had died had he not been the sympathetic and skilful physician? When in making a playhouse her ambition carried her beyond her ability to execute, and the boards and blocks would



The light imparted a refined glory to her head.







totter and fall whether or no, he was the only architect who could yet rear a palace out of the dismal ruin. The cows did not dare try to hook her when he was by, and when the run was high and the water splashed and whirled furiously under the narrow footbridge, he only could safely guide her over.

The light, as it disappeared into another part of the house, glimmered fitfully on her face, as if loath to leave it.

Glorified in that flickering illumination, Bertha seemed like an apparition from another world, a sight that might well have awed the ruffian who stood guard over Mr. Garrett.

"By gad, a mighty fine little gal, that," said he, and he extended a hand as if he would caress her. She shrank from it as she might from the paw of a bear, and what further horrified her was that she saw, as she thought, a glistening little serpent coiled around one of those coarse fingers. It had just crawled out from under the skin, she thought, for she could see a hole in the ball of the thumb and a callous path therefrom, and seemingly, also, it darted out its tongue at her.

But the light was gone in an instant and she hoped the snake could not see her. She got further behind Mr. Garrett's shoulder, but was yet in awful dread lest the loathsome little reptile might glide from the robber's hand and wiggle its way across Garrett's lap to bite her.

Abner had noticed the object, too, but to him it

appeared as it really was, a silver ring in the semblance of a snake.

"Don't be afraid, Sissy, I won't hurt you," said the man and she pressed closer still to Garrett and tightened her hold on his arm.

A moment later it could be seen that the men were in the parlor and were pulling out the drawers of the cabinet, which were the sacred depositories of Julia's dresses, jewelry and keepsakes. The stranger who touched them were worse than Uzzah, who put forth his hand upon the ark of God. It was the holy of holies in that household.

With a strange cry, at the same time a prayer and a defiance, Garrett sprang from his chair. The desperado struck him above the eye with the barrel of his revolver and pushed him roughly back.

Bertha uttered a long and piercing scream. The family never forgot the sound. Garrett always afterward said that he could hear it over again, just as distinctly as at first, every time he recalled the events of that night.

"Mercy on us, he's killed him!" cried Mrs. Garrett.

Dan dared to lean forward so far that his guard caught him by the shoulder. He began a question: "Father, are you"——

But in the light thrown along the porch from the parlor Bertha could see the blood running from the gash in Garrett's forehead, and she screamed again.

"Choke that brat," said one of the inside men with an oath, as he stepped to the door.

"Hurry up in there," he was answered by one of those standing guard.

"Father, are you hurt?" Dan made haste to ask, now that he had another opportunity.

"No, not much," replied his father, and then to the men: "Don't take my dead daughter's things. Take anything else or everything else, but don't take them."

"Don't worry. We don't want anything but your money," he was answered.

"Come on," shouted the men at the parlor door, as they threw the smoking lamp into the yard.

"Sorry I can't take that gal with me," said the leader as the three backed their way to the corner of the house. "Now you try to follow us and we'll have a shot for you."

All six then ran out the gate and down the road toward the river.

Dan proposed to George that they follow them, and this they did against the protest of Mrs. Garrett, who declared that they would be killed "sho" by those desperate men who were ready to do anything.

Dan ran into the kitchen and got the shotgun, and he and George took a short cut down the bluff through the timber to a point commanding a view of the road at no great distance from it.

While the pursuit, if pursuit it could be called, was being arranged, Abner Garrett walked about distractedly. Suddenly, without waiting to discover what had been taken, disregarding the sobbing of Bertha, and saying a word to no one, he hurried

bareheaded out through the woodyard and across the orchard, and plunged into the trees and bushes. He had no confidence that the robbers would leave Julia's pretty and valuable jewelry if they saw it, but on the contrary he now imagined it jingling in the dirty pockets of the fleeing villains. He had no intentions of any definable sort—only he must follow after. Even his determination to trace the robbers as far as he could came to him after he started.

He was disappointed, when he reached a ledge of the bluff, to find that for darkness he could not see the road that, farther down, ran along the base of the hills. He was about to turn back when the report of the shotgun indicated to him where the boys were. It came from a point a hundred yards to the north of him and nearer the road. He hastened in that direction.

He found the boys about to proceed down the hill. They had caught an indistinct glimpse of the men still running, and had fired at them or rather after them. The men were intending, it was thought, to get to the river. The boys had determined to cut across the cornfields in the bottoms and get near enough to the boat landing to be able to make sure if the robbers should leave that way. Mr. Garrett approved this plan, counselled them to be cautious, and returned to the house.

Meantime, the women, left alone, were scarcely in less fear than before. They imagined a masked face looking around every corner. They fancied that ene-



mies were peering in at them through the fence. They hardly dared step into the house for fear they would see uncouth strangers under the tables and hear the shuffling of feet under the beds or, worse still, be seized and foully dealt with. The rooms smelled strongly of oily smoke and soot. At the foot of the lilac bush, whither it had rolled after it had struck the ground, the dismantled lamp was still blazing and smoking and sputtering as if in demoniac rage from the violence and indignities it had suffered.

"Run git it," Mrs. Garrett had said to Maggie.

"No, no," gasped the simple woman. "I couldn't think of tetching it."

For to her it seemed utterly transformed from the peaceful and familiar luminary of the house into a brand dropped by some devil; besides, to get it would require too venturesome a journey for her bewildered and distracted mind to in any manner resolve on. It lay full ten yards from where she stood. Happily she had left a candle burning in the kitchen, with which she had been to the cellar to put away the milk, and this she was bold enough to go after, though on her way through the sitting room and to the little back porch on which the kitchen door opened, she had dread of being seized at every step.

And what a host of comfort the candle was! What a troop of evil images its unsteady rays drove away, and the plain features of the old sitting room never looked so friendly as at this moment in its light!

Save the disordered drawers of the bureau and the



broken glass in the fireplace, the face of things, the women were quite surprised to see, was unchanged. They had expected to behold some sort of ugly transformation. The clock was quietly ticking away as it had always done, as much as to say reassuringly to their fearful spirits: "All's well; all's well; all's well."

But neither Mrs. Garrett nor Maggie could muster up courage enough to examine the other rooms. Indeed they closed the doors tight and sat still. Bertha, after a long cry, was beginning to be relieved enough to use her tongue.

"Where's papa, mama? Did the neg'oes take him away?"

"No, no, chile," replied Mrs. Garrett. "Papa'll be here in a minute. He went to see if he could ketch those bad men—here he's comin' now."

She made the last remark as well to assure herself as Bertha, for footfalls on the porch had made her start. Then Garrett came in, holding in one hand the lamp that Maggie had been afraid to rescue. He had blown out the flame.

"Gone down to the river, I guess," said he, anticipating the first question which he supposed his wife would ask. "Probably had a skiff there and crossed over to the Kentucky side. Boys went down that way to see. What did they take? Everything, I suppose."

"'Deed we haven't looked. We been so sca'ed all the time we ha'dly da'ed move. That was an awful lick ove' yo' eye. Just look at yo' eye."

"Oh, nothing but a little cut. But let's see what they've done."

Taking the candle, he made straight, followed by the others, for Julia's cabinet. The drawers were on the floor, but all of Julia's things were there. The only thing taken from the house was Mr. Garrett's big pocketbook containing nine hundred dollars in bills.

"That fellow told the truth, didn't he?" said Garrett with something of a smile of satisfaction and surprise. "All they wanted was the money and the family is unharmed."

"Not one of po' Julia's things taken," said Mrs. Garrett with inexpressible content. "My, what hard creatures they must be! Just think what they were doing in here, and Dan's Lawd's prayer right befo' their eye starin' 'em in the face all the time."

She referred to a large and beautiful scroll of the Lord's prayer, the son's pen work, that hung framed on the wall.

"Such men don't stop for prayers, Mary, spoken or written, the Lord's or yours," said her husband with a little shake of the head and a faint smile, and he repeated the remark louder for Maggie's sake.

"No, but just to think of that. Who could it have been? Some of the thrashers? Did you have the pocketbook at the barn when you paid them off?"

"Yes, I had it at the barn, and the men I suppose saw it, but I think it could have been none of them."

"Little they care for the Lord's prayer or the Lord either," put in Maggie very seriously.

"For that matter," said Garrett, who had now so far recovered himself as to be able to joke a little,

"there's the family Bible on that stand, which they had to move to open the drawers."

Maggie nodded. This moving of the Bible was, under these circumstances, a peculiarly atrocious sacrilege in her view.

"Was it a man, papa?" asked Bertha, to whom the gruff leader was still a mystery.

"Why, yes, my child, didn't you think it was a man?"

"Then he was a neg'o, wasn't he?"

"His face was black, but it was only black cloth he had put on, so we could not tell who he was. But didn't you see his hands were white?"

"Yes, his hand was white—I saw a snake in his hand—a little snake—and it was white, too."

"Why, Bertha!" said Mrs. Garrett deprecatingly, and yet with some inquiry in her tone, for really it would not have surprised her if he had had his pockets full of snakes.

"Come to think of it, she's right," said Abner with a little laugh. "He did have a snake coiled around his finger."

Mrs. Garrett now shifted her "why" from Bertha to her husband, who directly explained it was nothing but a ring. To Garrett the ring was a trifling incident soon forgotten, but it remained in Bertha's memory.

The boys had now returned. The robbers, sure enough, had gone to the river, and got away in two skiffs. Dan and George could hear them laughing as they reached their boats, but could catch no words distinctly until they were out on the water and the

boys had crept closer to the river's edge, when one of the men was heard to say: "The old man wasn't going to stand it, was he, Zach? I thought you had a fight on your hands."

"Zach?" queried Maggie, deeply interested and inclining her head toward Dan.

"Zach or Jack—I couldn't be sure which."

"How that child did scream," said Garrett. "You didn't like to see me hurt, did you, dear?" And he lifted Bertha high in his arms and kissed her.

## CHAPTER III.

### GENESIS OF THE OLD PLANTATION.

IT was a memorable conversation held years before with his father which kept repeating itself over and over again in Abner Garrett's mind as he lay all the night after the robbery, restless and nervous on his bed. The amount of the money taken he had not thought of twice. Though he had good reason to believe that robbery alone was the purpose of the outrage he had suffered, yet he suspected that it was really secondary to a motive of humiliation, and this suspicion opened the way for a host of past sorrows to come trooping back. He had often met them all together, just as now, and buffeted the evil legion single-handed, as he must, but each time they went away he felt that he had been left weaker than before, and on this night they well nigh overcame him.

"Tonight is one more added," thought he. "How many must they be before I am no longer able to endure them? My mother would bid no spirits afflict me. My father was no conjurer. He is not now, but 'then curses would follow you all your life, and may they if you do that thing' and they have been following me all my life. An unusually proud and distinguished group they are, too, for they have heralds. They must be held in honor by the power that controls



them. They must be creatures of rank in their woful country. For ordinary occasions only common ones are sent out, but when a man is to be followed up for a lifetime, the aristocrats are called on. In some dark way they move living things to carry warnings and threats and signs for them. Make hawks fly, cause owls to hoot at unseemly hours of the day and night. Send squirrels or other wild things close to your house to try to peep in at your window. Going to kill one of your family? Have a bird flit into your room to warn you of it. Break a looking-glass and then some one's heart. Contrive all sorts of strange little accidents to put you in dread before striking you. But then all this is nonsense."

Nonsense? Could he make himself believe it? Even with this word on his tongue, in his distressful no-sleep and half-sleep, he felt himself in the darkness of the shadow cast by indefinite omens of fate.

Dreaming, he observed in the distance the sky becoming overcast by a cloud, and the wind blew strong. At length it was to rain. But as the cloud approached, it took on to his fevered vision the outlines of a huge bird, and, as its wings moved up and down, the wind strained the trees and filled the air with dust. The sight, indeed, was like that of the approach of a terrible storm. And as on the bird came, it hid the whole sky and its passage was like that of a tempest. It uttered a cry. The sound was like that of sharp thunder. It turned its head and cast an eye downward. It was like a flash of lightning. It shed feathers

that filled the air. They were foul and wet. It screamed again.

Garrett awoke with a start.

"Oh, that hawk," he mumbled. "Is it so that harpies will come to pollute every dish of happiness prepared for me?"

His mind ran back to the fateful talk with his father, and even farther back than that to his happy life in youth on the old southern plantation. Then he lived over his life for the last twenty-six years, and this was the panorama of time:

Mary was the prettiest slave girl ever sold in the old market at Louisville, in the state of Georgia. So striking was her beauty, heightened at the moment by those refined touches which sadness sometimes adds to the human face, that after she had been placed on the block a hush came over the noisy multitude of planters and speculators, and men crowded about and beheld her in silent astonishment, forgetting, as it seemed, that she was to be bid for.

The girl was perhaps twenty years of age, to all appearances white, and of graceful figure. Even the auctioneer desisted from his vociferous occupation for a few moments, being either under the same spell as his patrons or shrewd enough to know that such an interval of silence would have much effect in enhancing the offers.

"What!" he finally exclaimed with a roguish twinkle, "none of you want her?"

The bidding then started and soon grew spirited.

The girl after a famous contest went to the elder Garrett, Abner's father, who had come over from his Alabama plantation to transact business, a part of which was to secure at the block another female servant for the house.

Curious to know more about his new slave than could be learned while the sale was in progress, he ascertained that she had been brought to market by a dapper, jovial young man acting as agent for a worn-out gentleman of Spanish extraction who, it was stated, had his own special reasons for selling.

"She's choice property," said the young man. "You'll not be fooled on her. Not often you get her breed. Her mammy came from the West Indies."

This was as definite information as her purchaser got regarding her origin. He feared for a time that some grievously bad quality might appear in her, but she proved to be a perfect servant, and in truth so comported herself in this capacity that it was thought none other had ever equalled or could equal her. Never failing in the least particular to show the deference proper to her station, she exhibited all the tender assiduities and, so far as was possible under the circumstances, performed all the functions, of a thoughtful and affectionate daughter in a household to which a daughter had been denied.

Abner Garrett, the son, was a sensitive and somewhat fanciful young man, independent in both his intellectual and emotional moods. He was the same age as Mary. She had been in the family two or three years when,

in spite of the social disparity between them, he fell in love with her. He was startled when he first found that frankness required him to admit it to himself, for he realized, even though no worshipper of tradition, how strong were the barriers that lay between him and a union with her. But he became bold enough to level them all.

The relation between him and his father had always been confidential, and he therefore, not without many misgivings, opened his heart to the elder Garrett on this matter of his affection for the bondsmaid. He proposed to take her north and there marry her, and so avoid scandal and social ostracism. He denied, and perhaps with some reason, that there was a drop of negro blood in her veins.

The father's surprise quickly turned into positive anger. He ridiculed the idea that was in his son's mind, declared that by mentioning the subject even in this private way he had disgraced the family, and said he hoped he would never think or speak of it again.

It was not long after that, and when his love had been intensified by observation of the specially attentive and kind ministrations of Mary to his afflicted mother, that young Garrett spoke out of the abundance of his heart also to his gentler parent. She raised her head from her pillow and with a look of disgust said: "Shocking!"

That was all.

A year after his mother had been laid in her grave Abner had the conversation with his father which was



set forth at the beginning of this story. He left the room abruptly in silent rage, and, repeating in his mind "Your divine wench," "A slave," "Would father the child," "Will sell them both," he went straightway to the cabin near by, where Mary now lodged, picked up the four-weeks-old baby, kissed it fervently, and looked for the first time and for a long time on the face of his own child.

Shortly the death of his father permitted young Garrett to execute without remonstrance the plans he had cherished. He freed the negroes that came to him with the estate, and sold the old plantation. For some time he had been making inquiries cautiously about a desirable locality for a home in the not too distant north, and on one pretext and another he had made excursions into several portions of it.

He now chose a spot on the banks of the Ohio river in Indiana, and this for two reasons chiefly. One was that he would still be in sight of the old home, as he called the whole south now, for always in view were the Kentucky hills, and the steamboats passing up the river, bearing cargoes of stuffs with which he was so familiar, would exhale a fragrance of the sunny land and convey intangible messages soothing to the homesickness which he feared he might always feel. The other reason was that in this county some abolitionists from Ohio had just established a general school, known as Eleutherian College, open to children and youth, black or white. Garrett presumed that such an institution would not be located amid environments uncon-



genial, and he therefore took it for granted that he and his wife were entering a social atmosphere of a sort that would be agreeable to them or at least not offensive. He did not then know that the erection of the school buildings had been delayed by incendiaries and that there were elements in the whole country roundabout that later would furnish recruits to the "Knights of the Golden Circle."

Though Mrs. Garrett might pass for a white woman, it was her husband's expectation that, sooner or later, it would become known she had been a slave, and such knowledge would necessarily involve her being regarded as of tainted blood; a conclusion, too, to which even the beauty of her face and figure, having the voluptuousness and some of the hue and fire of the tropics in it, would contribute. Garrett surmised, however, that, under all the circumstances, this fact would have no considerable influence in determining the nature of the social treatment they would receive.

Garrett's new farm stretched along the top of the bluff for a mile and a half, and back from the bluff a third of that distance. It had all the main appointments of a southern plantation. The owner fondly called it a plantation, and by that designation it came to be known for miles around. In remote parts of it were log cabins for the occupancy of the men who were hired by the year. Picked up and put down on the banks of some Alabama river, the house yard set with a few of the more delicate warm-climate shrubs, one field shorn of its wheat and covered with the deep

green of a tobacco crop, and another stripped of its corn and blanched with cotton, it would not have seemed out of place among its new neighbors. Only, before this transportation, it would have been necessary to fill up the ice pond, excavated in the midst of the beech woods, and substitute for the beech another tree.

A southern atmosphere seemed over it all, so that indeed it did appear out of place where it was. But this gave it a singular interest and a picturesqueness which never failed to impress everyone who became acquainted with the place.

The river, a mile away and below, flowed straight south here, and the house might have been built to face the magnificent scene presented, but it was the whim, if we should call it that, of Garrett that it should front north, and in this direction the view was almost as grand, though not so expanded. For across the highway one looked down into a deep dell with wealth of romantic character in rugged rock and noble tree, whose lowest point was marked by a little stream, the waters of which had always such merriment and vivacity that they seemed just to have heard that there was such a big playground as the Gulf of Mexico, and were in haste, foolish waters, to rush thither away.

The house, partly of brick and partly of wood, all painted white, was in its general aspect of typical southern style, and in all its interior was the air of comfort, refinement and good cheer.

And often was welcome spoken at the door, for Mr.

Garrett was fond of entertaining a friend. Sometimes it was the doctor or the preacher from College Hill or a judge of the district court at Madison or one of the county officers. Sometimes, in the earlier years of his residence, the congressman from the district would drive down to spend the day with him. Not infrequently he had several of these together.

And the Old Plantation was a delightful place to visit. Not only was it a well-kept and well-appointed country seat, but it had that unique attraction due to the southern taste of its owner, which had been made to express itself in so many physical manifestations. And to these allurements must always be added Garrett's excellencies as a host.

But ere long a chilling wind began to blow against him. There were certain men who had never, save when their acquaintance with him was new, brought their wives to his house. He found before long that the people of culture, both in Madison and in the country, were "talking" about Mrs. Garrett, and he observed that something like that very sentiment was abroad that he had fled north to escape. At first he was inclined to suppose that it was confined to a few, and those of the most fastidious sort. He had, however, opportunity soon to know that it was prevalent in what was recognized as the best society.

The knowledge fell upon his spirit like a pall. It was no great consolation to him that, as the slavery contest waxed warmer and others drew away from him, the abolitionists seemed to draw closer to him, for he

had not enough of the martyr disposition to relish belonging to a despised sect. He had been wearied often, also, by the continual reform talk which he heard from his friends among the abolitionists, and his patience had been sorely tried by listening to denunciations of slaveholders which he knew were unjust and undeserved.

However, he allowed the good people who came down from College Hill to get no suspicion of his whole sentiment toward them, and it was easy for him to maintain such a degree of confidence and familiarity with them as could be based on a rational respect that did not amount to affection.

Finding himself thus neglected by most of those whose esteem he prized and whose society he coveted, Mr. Garrett, strongly prone to melancholy, had many an hour of black depression. Occasionally he would resolve to boldly contradict the now commonly accepted report that Mrs. Garrett had negro blood by an open and positive announcement to the contrary, and by giving out the facts concerning her origin as she held them, which were, in short, that she was of white and creole parentage, and that the curse of servitude first fell on her line through some cunning and wicked device of which her mother was the victim.

But the only progress Garrett could make with this resolution was to unresolve it, for, aside from a pride that could not bend to a defence in a matter of this kind, sure to bring on argument and controversy, what positive proof had he? Only the legend of a slave girl to



which constant credence had not been given even by himself.

And there was the chief fact that his wife had been a slave. And it would be asked, too, why he had come north then. If his wife had not the fatal ingredient that damned the whole result, fair as it was, why did he not prove this and remain in the south that he loved so well?

Therefore Garrett concluded that by saying a word he would only make himself laughed at. So he said nothing, but he began a suffering that ended only with his last breath.

"They like very well to get out for a day's drive," he would observe bitterly, in speaking of certain men in Madison who continued, when the weather was good, to call occasionally and remain for dinner. "They like to come down the road along the river. They like the country feast I give them, and to smack their lips over my wine. Then they go home and crack jokes about my wife."

His demeanor toward these coarse spirits became colder. He found a quiet way of decreasing the frequency of their visits by insinuating that he was not running a club house for the entertainment of Jefferson county gentlemen.

The beautiful wife was not made acquainted with the full depth of her husband's disappointment. Even if he had been inclined to communicate it to her it would have been quite impossible, for she had not the profundity of feeling to appreciate it. Her dispo-



sition was rather that of a child. She was less sensitive to the judgment of the world. Her spirits were of such a natural liveliness as that a long-continued depression of them was out of the question. She could on the occasion feel with keenness the smart of offense, but the pain was over with the hour. Her home and her immediate neighborhood were large enough a world for her to be perfectly happy in.

Garrett's ambition, like that of a southern planter, had been to have a large circle of acquaintances, to be on close terms with families of standing and distinction near and far, to maintain a home whose soft influences would be so charming that it would be held worth the while and the pains to make even a long journey to get for a day or a week within their immediate operation. He aspired to be, in short, a man held in esteem and considered of importance in his county and state.

His progress toward this altogether worthy eminence had now been stopped, and he realized that the closed way would never be reopened. Continuing to be an interested observer of the general events of his time, his activities were henceforth to be confined to the world with which his wife was content—his home and his neighborhood. Living around him were few people of superior intelligence and means. It could be noticed that some of these grew cold, though not to the point of withholding any of the common civilities, while the friendship and regard of others of their class remained to all outward appearances unimpaired.

The rest of the nearby population, composed exclusively of farmers, did not much trouble itself with the problem that those of higher pretensions had felt called on to solve. Sometimes the neighbors would discuss Mrs. Garrett in the most private and confidential way, and thus give voice in a whisper to what was the prevailing substratum of sentiment respecting her. This it is hard to exactly describe. There was, as has been indicated, just enough in her looks to give plausibility to the charge—for that it was—that the blood of the abased race had tinged her skin. This and the fact that she had once been yoked with the blackest of that race in bondage told against her. But little Julia—hair like the sunshine and face like a peach; followed by Walter, as if by a handful of stormcloud, for his hair was as black as night and his countenance was swarthy; but he by Dan, blue eye, light hair and fair complexion, like his sister and his father—the children illustrated the alternation of conviction and doubt with respect to the mother of them all. She was in the twilight zone between the races where each might claim her, and in this same atmosphere all who stood near her were in varying degrees and with varying results enveloped.

Garrett henceforth, outside of his own family circle, conducted himself with more reserve than had been his wont; but within that circle his affections, always warm, came to be in a state of glow. His tenderness toward his children was lavish and unvarying, and, in the case of his boys, carried him into indulgence that

was harmful to them, for they were high-spirited and imperious fellows who could not relinquish at a hint, as Julia could, a desire that found not instant favor with their father. His judgment was good, but intensity of affection mingled with a fusive sympathy—the very thing that causes some parents to be stern—prevented him from being firm.

While his fatherly attention to the two sons and his pride in them were unusual, his favorite was Julia. He could not be with the boys so much as with her, for their various and frequent enterprises of diversion or amusement took them much from home into all the surrounding country. Julia was a home girl, and more available as a companion on little horseback journeys or skiff rides on the river or numberless aesthetic undertakings about the house and garden, in which she shared all the interest and pleasure shown by her father.

But Abner Garrett's beneficence could not be confined within the walls of his own house. It diffused itself over the community and stole quietly into the home of many a neighbor soon after strait or distress was known to have made its way in there. Besides, he had built at his own expense, a mile away, a church edifice which he gave over to a congregation of Baptists, and contributed the larger part of the not enormous pay of a preacher who held services once a month. Before the building of this church Garrett had been accustomed to attend frequently, with his family, the church at College Hill, but one day, as they were passing

out, they heard the whisper, "She's colored," from a knot of women at one side. To that church they went no more, and presently the roof of the new edifice could be seen from Garrett's house rising beyond the hill-top in the pasture.

He had, as well, furnished more than half the money for the purchase of a township library of several hundred volumes, one of the first and one of the best of such institutions of popular education and culture, still too few, as in most places else, in southern Indiana.

The people of the community, taken as a whole, were grateful enough for these kindnesses, and, as occasion came, were frank enough to express their appreciation. They felt, too, that the Plantation, a novelty among the farming establishments in that part of the country, always well kept up, the seat of a family which was the object of much interest and in which there was some mystery, distinguished the vicinity and threw a glamor over the entire township. Garrett knew all this, but he felt that there was in the common minds of others a stigma upon himself and his own.

Until Julia died Mr. Garrett had never failed to make sport of the superstition of his wife as it from time to time came to the surface. But from that hour it began to take hold on him. In his lighter moods he would scout the notion still. But let him think of the early morning when Julia went away, and the vision would appear of the catalpa tree with the sombre death-herald in its top. Then he would re-



member the lore that his wife had taught him in these gloomy matters.

Had not the plaintive chirping of the canary in its cage in the next room aroused his mother a half hour before her end came so that she might face death fully awake?

Did he do right to make light of it when his wife told him that at the very moment when he must have been listening to the imprecations of his father, baby Julia, though only a month old, appeared, like a grown person, to be listening attentively to something, and ended by giving her mother a strangely serious look? Had not that hour been a crisis?

Was it not a fact that a swallow came and left on the porch a red dogwood leaf a few days before the night when the whole Plantation was lighted up by the burning of the barn?

A week before he had been defrauded in a business transaction had not Walter found a black snake coiled up on the front walk?

Had not a squirrel been found scratching its ear on the top of the pump the very day before the report came that Mayor Ripley of Madison had said: "Mr. Garrett is a very fine man, a polite, perfect gentleman, but he spoiled himself when he married a nigger"?

\* \* \* \* \*

These things and a hundred like them were running through Abner Garrett's mind on this restless night following the robbery. He recalled, too, that Walter's

favorite pony one afternoon had come up near the house, put its head over the fence and whinnied piteously and long at about the same hour, it was afterwards learned, as Walter had been insulted at his college in Ohio by a coarse remark about his mother, and that the pony, about as soon as Walter had had time to thrash the rowdy, kicked up its heels, held high its head, and pranced proudly about the orchard.

This recollection reminded Garrett that he must in the morning send a letter to Walter, who was spending the early part of his vacation under the tutelage of one of the college professors.

"Well will it be if the hawk had only to do with the robbery," thought the distressed man. "But it lowered itself over Bertha. Was she designated too? Or did the hawk fly on only because her time was not yet come?"

The dawn broke and Mr. Garrett arose.

## CHAPTER IV.

### "SHIFTLESS HENRY."

"HEY there, 'Shif,' why have you a white shirt on today, and why are you chalking it?"

Walter Garrett thus accosted "Shiftless Henry" one bright morning in June. Walter and his father occupied easy chairs on the shaded front porch, and Henry was shambling his way through the gate. He was pushing against it with his body to make progress, for both hands were engaged at his bosom. A white front beamed forth there as if glad to be out in the daylight again, and Henry was using a piece of school crayon on it with a dexterity of movement quite uncommon with him.

The lank, genial fellow came stalking along up the walk with a smile which spread over every part of his countenance. He shook hands with both men and then, turning to Walter, said:

"You athk two quethtionth though they are ex-theedingly clothe together. I will anther them in the order in which they were athked. Firtth, I have a white shirt on for the reathon that thith ith surely a day to celebrate. You think it ith a day to celebrate, do you not?"

And he laughed so loud that everyone about the house had instant and unmistakable intelligence that he was on the ground.

"But besidth your affair," he continued, "I alwayth have a white shirt on on the eighteenth of June, for you see thith ith the anniverthary of the battle of Waterloo, and you know my father wath a soldier on the Britith thide in that great conflict. Yeth, thir, sixty-three yearth ago today. If my father wath alive today he would be eighty-three yearth old, and he would have a white shirt on too, I allow."

"Why, this is something new," said Walter. "You didn't use to do it."

"Ever sinth I had a white shirt and coming to the yearth of understanding. Now you see, besidth, Dan ith going to start hith new boat today. Leavth Cincinnati thith morning, don't he? And will get down here thith evening to take you to New Orleanth. I thought that wath worth celebrating."

"Yes, I see," said Walter. "Your white shirt is eminently proper. You have lots of cause to celebrate."

"Well, you have cauthe to celebrate yerself, I allow," and Henry's gaunt form bent almost double while he coughed out a huge volume of laughter. Walter and his father were both shaking at the spectacle he presented. He vomited forth his mirth. At this moment he might with the utmost propriety have been sent away to an emergency hospital for the tickled. So convoluted was his face that it seemed the bones beneath must have been wrinkled too.

But presently he had convalesced as far back as to his flesh-deep smile.

"Now ath to the second queththion," said he, "why



I chalk my shirt. My primary object, of courthe, ith to cover up defekth. Shirt geth a little soiled or some tobacco juith geth on it, can cover it up so that it ith just ath good ath at firtht. I can make a shirt last me a long time that way. I do thith further for reathonth of philanthropy and convenienth. It savth washing, and henth my mother, who ith getting pretty old now, ith relieved of a good deal of a burden, and it ith very convenient to wear the same shirt for a long time."

"'Shif,' you are getting to be an inventor," said Walter. "You will do some great thing yet. But where do you get the chalk?"

"Oh, the neighborth children bring it from the schoolhouse for me. It don't take but one pieth a year. But now let me offer my congratulathionth. Who'd ever thought you'd be married at last? My best wisheth," and Henry bent again with loud haw-haws.

"Thank you, 'Shif,' and I know you mean it," said Walter as he grasped tightly his friend's big hand. "But you must see my wife," and he ran into the house to bring her. He was not long gone.

"Ida, this is Mr. Anthony," he said as he led out the door a frail little doll of a woman. Then followed an exhibition of much grace on the one side and much awkwardness on the other which ended with Henry's saying:

"Now let me wish to you ath I did to your husband, and to both of you here together, much happineth and a safe voyage on the sea of matrimony."

Saying which, Henry gave the dainty woman whom Walter had chosen for his wife a pretty thorough looking-over. She was not a little embarrassed at the directness with which he gazed upon her and took her measure and her weight with his eye. But he had no suspicion that he was violating any of the canons of decorum. Once in a while she would glance up at him, expecting each time that his scrutiny would be intermitted, but she would find his eyes still on her, and he would smile—such a smile, though, as everyone could see, was simply benignant. He was not quick enough to satisfy himself in regard to her without this intent survey. Had he not a right to look at her, to really look at her? He had had opportunity, and been welcome, to make a far closer examination of every other novelty her husband had ever secured in his whole life up to that hour—the ponies, the watches, the dogs, the guns—and was his inspection to be less faithful when so interesting a thing as a wife was brought home? No, indeed. He was too conscientious.

The new Mrs. Garrett went through the ordeal very bravely. She told Henry she was delighted to meet any of Walter's old friends. He replied that he was so to meet any of his new ones, and "espethially a friend that wath to stick closer than a brother."

"He's just as long and lean and lank as ever, Ida," said Walter.

"Better long and lean and lank than fat," said Henry. "You know that if you must be too lean or too fat, it ith better to be the former. Do you know why?"

He directed the inquiry to Ida. She answered that she was not sure that she did.

"It ith just the differenth between one load and two loadth," he informed her. "He who ith too fat carrieth both the reproach of being too fat and the fat itself. He who ith too lean hath only the reproach. He hath no physical burden along with it, and the reproach alone may not be very heavy."

Henry then proceeded to make his apology for not having called sooner, for Walter and his wife had been there three days. It was that he had not heard about their arrival until late the evening before, and it was one of his tenets that ignorance was a valid excuse for any delinquency. He said that one of the greatest mistakes of jurisprudence was that this doctrine was not allowed in case of violation of law.

It was an eventful day. Walter was there with his bride, whom the family had never seen before. After a good deal of fruitless dabbling in art and of traveling, Walter had decided to be a lawyer and on the very day that he received his diploma as bachelor of laws at Ann Arbor he was married and set off with his bride for a year in Europe. He was now going to set up in his profession in New Orleans, a plan which considerably pleased his father, who thought that perhaps it was not too soon for the family to get back to the dear south, a new south now, after the exile of one generation.

Dan had at length realized his dream of having a steamboat of his own, the finest on the river, and

what a pleasant thing it was that on the vessel's first trip from Cincinnati to New Orleans it was to carry his brother and his wife to their chosen home. This matter of the boat, also, was one that the elder Garrett liked, for that would make Dan as much a southerner as northerner and would at length get him at something worth while.

Walter had spent at college, to say nothing of the years before and since, what ten poor boys might have comfortably gone through on, and Dan had squandered several little fortunes in ill-judged and foolishly managed business adventures. The father had grieved a good deal about this, not more because it had told sadly on his holdings than because it gave him the apprehension that the loved sons were not going to make their mark. He was glad they had been able to lord it over those who, as it did happen from time to time, threw out the slyest of hints about their blood. The more readily he kept them in funds on this account. He was delighted that Walter had been accepted without hesitation by so amiable a girl, but he was dreading lest here under his own roof her mind might become poisoned by suspicion, for Mrs. Garrett's physical peculiarities were being rather accentuated by age.

But were the boys cursed through him?

Here at last was to be a turning point.

And Professor Augustus Bland of College Hill was coming down to take dinner with them and be one of the party to go down to the boat to see the happy



couple off. The same carriage that had been sent to bring him would bring Bertha, too, who was about to finish her third year at the Hill.

"So, 'Shif,' you are well to be on the ground," said Walter, "and if you hadn't come we would have sent for you. You shall stay and see us off at the river."

Henry allowed he had already "calkilated" as much.

The elder Mrs. Garrett appeared just as this arrangement was being made, and said "Yes indeed" both to Walter's imperious invitation and to Henry's answer, and she added: "How could we have any big doin's like this without you bein' aroun', Henry?"

Henry laughed a little very complacently at the compliment implied in this.

"Well, I'm a little like molasseth," said he. "I do seem to stick to everything I wunth touch, and I allow I'm something of a nuisanthe thometimeth."

"Of cou'se you ah. We'll have you make up fo' it by tyin' some of the boxiz we'ah fixin' up fo' these young folks," said Mrs. Garrett.

The two women went into the house to attend to some of the packing they had on hand, and the three men had most of the forenoon to themselves on the porch.

"So Bertha hath not come down yet," observed Henry.

"No," said Abner Garrett, "they're just now finishing up the work of the year at the school, and it is a bad time for her to get away even for a day. She will get to see her brother and her sister-in-law only today,

but we've told her we'll let her take a trip to New Orleans to visit them later in the summer."

"That will be nithe for her. I reckon she ith right smart of a student, ithn't she?"

"She's doing fine," answered Garrett.

Henry nodded his head with much satisfaction, and then, turning to Walter, said:

"So, Walter, you've been reading the lawth. Well, you ought to make a good lawyer. Must be quite a job to read over all of 'em, but you ought to make a good one. Reckon you know more about the lawth than you did twelve yearth ago, eh?" and he began to laugh, but he stopped, for a look of pain passed over Mr. Garrett's face and a cloud came across Walter's. He could never make a laughing matter of those events of twelve years ago.

The robbery had been followed by something worse.

Walter had been promptly informed by letter of all the circumstances of the crime, and had hastened home in wrathful impetuosity to avenge the outrage on his family. He berated Dan and the hired man George with much warmth for tamely submitting, as he put it, to such insult and injury. Why did they not collar the villains and choke or kick the life out of them on the spot? And, anyway, why did they not continue in pursuit of them until they had at least made sure who they were? Were there not other skiffs at the river?

For a week the infuriated lad stormed about the neighborhood like a Harry Hotspur, and by the end of

that time had convinced himself and several others that the leader of the robbers must have been Jack Simpson, a good-for-nothing, mysterious vagabond who lived with two disreputables like unto himself several miles down the river. How could there be any doubt about it? Had not Dan heard his very name at the river as they put off? Did not Simpson have red whiskers, and was it not certain that he had had more money about him recently than ever before in his life? And how did he live, how could he live, except by stealing? Mr. Garrett, it was true, and Dan and the hired man agreed that the leader was a larger man than Simpson, but Walter explained this discrepancy in an instant by saying that in the excitement and terror of the moment they had magnified Simpson into a giant.

Against their judgment, George and Dan, as readily as any other of twenty young men in the neighborhood, agreed to help lynch Simpson, for that was the sort of justice that the still angry and hot-headed Walter had decreed he should receive.

The plan wellnigh carried through. Simpson's head had twice struck the under side of a limb with a violent bump, when, since he still protested his innocence in answer to commands that he confess, Walter himself, who with most force had pulled the rope, was stricken with doubt and gave the order to gallop away.

The sequel to the night's madness was that every one of these young men was found guilty of assault and battery and fined twenty-five dollars and costs at

Madison a few weeks later, and Abner Garrett footed the bill.

The judgment and the fines, however, which had, indeed, been anticipated from the first, carried small odium compared with another matter at the trial. When, to prove something or other, in extenuation (for no justification was attempted) Mrs. Garrett was called as a witness, she was challenged by the prosecuting attorney, who had himself feasted at the Garrett board and grown merry over the wine poured out for him there, on the ground that she was a colored person and therefore under the law of the state incompetent to testify. The question might have been argued, but the husband would not allow it, and at a suggestion from him the defending attorney simply withdrew the call.

The circumstance, happening, as it did, in a public place, in the presence of some of the most respectable men in the county, a matter to go down in the records of the court, mentioned in the report of the case in the town papers, reviving the offensive gossip regarding Mrs. Garrett which for years had been quiet, sounding forth as with blast of trumpet what had hitherto been spoken only in whispers, was to Abner Garrett a terrible calamity. It affected him as the death of a child, the loss of property or some overwhelming personal disgrace would have affected another man. For weeks afterward he brooded over it silently and constantly, and kept ransacking his memory to discover if just before the trial he had seen any strange sight or heard



any strange sound that might have portended this galling misfortune.

But there was no time for the unfortunate reference just made by "Shiftless Henry" to turn Garrett's mind into a gloomy channel, for in an instant the carriage bearing Bertha and Prof. Bland was observed coming down the road, with Bertha waving her handkerchief above the driver's shoulder.

## CHAPTER V.

### PUCK, PREACHER AND PROPOSAL.

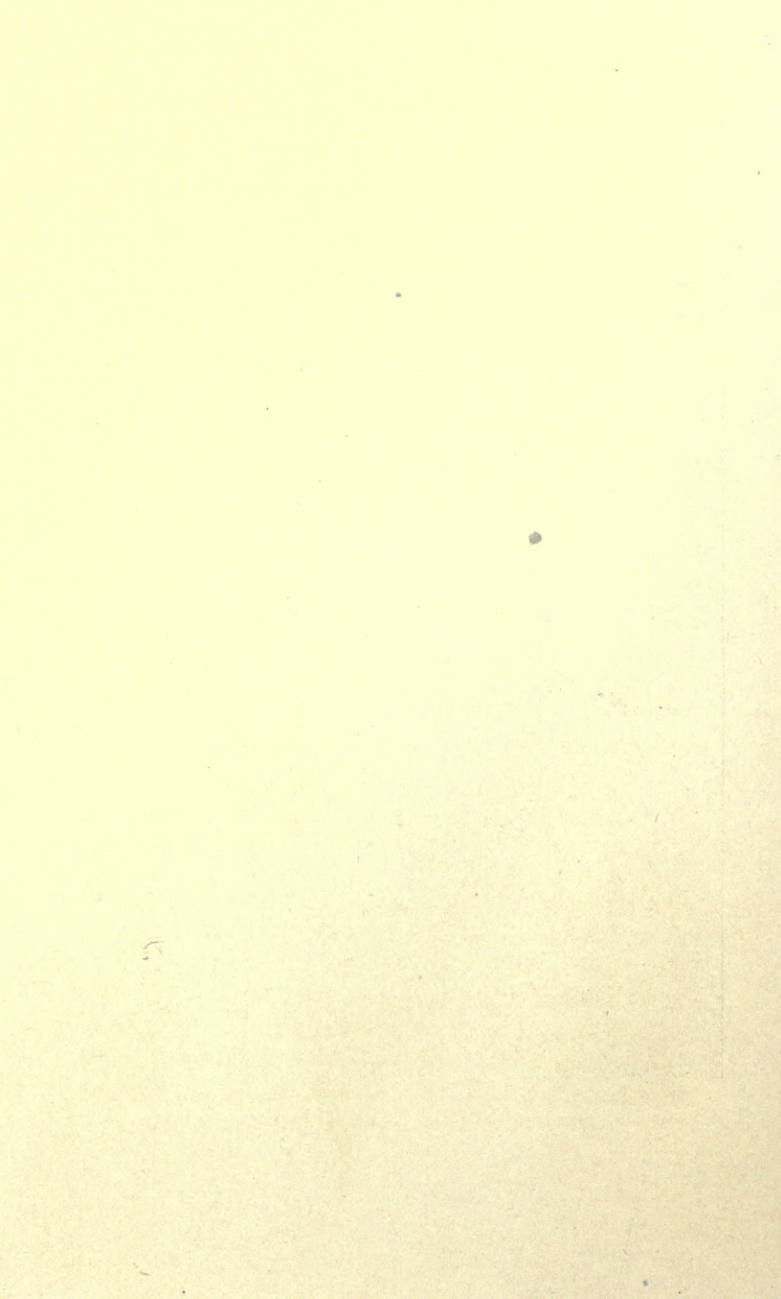
A BALLOON view of the scene as the carriage stopped at the little gate to the west of the house would have shown the black top of the vehicle and six other phenomena crowding to its side, and all so various and animated as to give the impression of some gay colors encircling the black.

In an instant a lively pink object bounds from underneath the sable shelter and is seized by tentacles thrown out from either side of a point of gray. Released from this embrace, it collides in turn, as if there were a mutual attraction of affinity, with three of the other contiguous bodies. In the case of the fifth the pink seems to be seized against its will, for its arms are extended as if repellent; and when the turn of the sixth comes, which is a more irregular object than any of the others, it is observed to reach out a long arm with a long, flat extremity, which action is met with a similar but far more graceful maneuver on the part of the pink. The two extensions join, and the cable thus formed vibrates noticeably at the sagging point in the middle.

But so interesting a performance attracts us closer, and we descend, indeed, to the very spot, where we arrive just in time to see Henry all in a blush on some account,



He turned his face to the sky and with a most kindly smile.





and pretty Bertha evidently quite put out because Old Maggie took the liberty of kissing her before company, and would do it although Bertha sought to prevent so familiar an approach.

Professor Bland's exit from the carriage was perforce much more deliberate and careful than Bertha's. First came a crutch whose lower end was placed with great precision on the ground; then a leg with the belonging foot which tried its bearing on the step; and then the professor himself, his well-worn, old, stove-pipe hat and his hard-worked shoulder first, dragging on his other side a dangling, shrunken leg, which frail as it was, was too heavily weighted with a half-grown and misshapen foot; then the other arm and cane, and with the assistance of Walter the dear, afflicted old gentleman was safely disembarked and cordially saluted by the whole company.

He turned his face to the sky and with a most kindly smile quoted Thompson:

But happy they, the happiest of their kind,  
Whom gentler stars unite, and in one fate  
Their hearts, their fortunes and their beings blend.

As he concluded he bestowed a benedictory look, for an Amen to his quotation, upon Walter and his bride.

The happy company then passed through the gate and moved in careless procession to the house. Right of way on the narrow walk was given to the late arrivals, the others forming on either side an attentive escort.

Here in the van, as she well deserved to be, was Bertha, of beautiful face and form, vivacious, with a delicate spring and suppleness in her every movement, and endowed with a thousand outward and inward graces, blooming in the morning of life like a rose in the morning of day with a freshness as of dawn still upon her.

Behind her the old professor, maimed and deformed from his birth, hobbling along between crutch and cane, with the shrunken leg and the hanging foot, exhibiting in every movement that pitiful awkwardness which his infirmity imposed; his clothes well-worn but not quite shabby; his face wrinkled and his hair whitened by suffering and by age; alone in the world; one on whom, even though he was a cripple, time had laid its hand as harshly as on another. More pathetic than this it was that the professor was keenly sensitive to it all. A poet's soul in such a tenement as this! It was like a jewel wrapped in a rag—but his face was fine, as the rag might still have upon it one bit of pretty tapestry. To hear him talk about the things he loved—it was like listening to the singing of a bird with a broken wing.

"To think, mamma, that Old Maggie should grab me and hug me and kiss me like that before all these people," said Bertha to Mrs. Garrett up in her room, where she had gone to lay off her hat and restore all those trifles of face and dress disarranged by the journey. "What will Ida think?"

"Why, Bertha, she won't think about it at all. She knows Maggie's been in our family sence you was a

baby. She won't reckon it strange that she loves you enough to kiss you when you've been away. You remember Maggie used to tend you fo' yeahs and yeahs when you was a chile, and she thinks as much of you as any of us."

"As much as papa or you? No, she doesn't. Anyhow, she should not act that way before all these people. She's always treating me as if I were a baby. I don't mind if she likes me, but I don't want her to make a fuss over me when company is here."

At that very moment poor Old Maggie was sitting in the kitchen crying because Bertha had struggled in her arms and had seemed angry because she kissed her.

Ida had noticed the struggle at the carriage, but was astonished that it should affect the broken old servant so deeply. She said nothing, for Old Maggie was now quite hard of hearing, but she placed her hand on the woman's head.

Old Maggie wiped her eyes. Rising from her chair and bringing her sad face close to Ida's, she said with brightening countenance and much animation:

"She's a good girl. She's a smart girl, and she's making a perfect lady. I've tended her since she was a child. Don't you think she's pretty?"

Ida nodded her head with an assuring compression of the lips and a sparkle in her eyes. Old Maggie nodded to make the agreement perfect, shifted the coffee pot on the stove and resumed the slicing of potatoes.

Coming down stairs, Bertha hastened to see to it that

the venerable professor was given a cool place at the north side of the house, for she knew how fond he was of sitting out of doors. She plucked him a fragrant rose from the climbing bush at the porch. He put the stem between his teeth and thus held the flower. She had hoped he would do this. It was a habit of his which all his friends liked to observe. Many and many a time, as he hobbled into church or the college chapel with a flower hanging from his mouth, did he seem thus to bring a tiny bit more of holiness into the sanctuary or a little brightness and freshness to contrast with the dead old walls and benches in the school-room.

Here he sat talking with Walter and his father, while "Shif" ceased not to give him close and curious consideration. Bertha re-entered the house to rejoin Mrs. Garrett and Ida, delaying only to give her assistance in arranging for the dinner until she should bring Ida to a window that the latter might see what a picture the crippled old man made with the rose in his mouth.

Abner Garrett, in response to Prof. Bland's inquiry, began to explain why Dan would not tie up his boat at the landing and spend a day or two at the old home. In doing this he proudly recited, though with some misgiving, his son's own reason as communicated a few days earlier by letter. This was that Dan was anxious to make as good time as possible with the freight that was going aboard for different points, seeing this was the boat's first trip down. The father was continuing to give the substance of what Dan



said about the importance of a good record for the first trip when he was interrupted by the appearance of "Brother Charles" at the gate.

"Why, no preaching nex' Sunday?" queried "Shif," looking at Mr. Garrett.

"No," was the reply, "and I can't imagine what brings him over here unless there is to be a funeral or a wedding in the Stony Creek neighborhood."

Rev. Charles Warner, whose home was several miles over on the Kentucky side, was the preacher who once a month conducted what he always called "divine service" at Good Hope church. The next Sunday was not his "regular day" either here or at the other church, five miles away, over which he also had charge, and hence Mr. Garrett conjectured that some unusual occasion had brought him thus out of time to this side of the river.

This surmise was strengthened when it was observed as he came up the walk that the preacher wore a confused expression on his face. It seemed, also, though one could not be sure, that his embarrassment had some serious cause.

He took the first moment after he was greeted by "Shif," who looked a good deal puzzled, and by Mr. Garrett, who in spite of himself looked a trifle so, to explain that he had decided to spend the week in "pastoral visitation" among the members of his two Indiana congregations. He professed to be much surprised to find Walter at home, and more so to hear that he had brought with him a bride. The presence

of Prof. Bland, with whom he had a slight acquaintance, and of Bertha, was equally, he declared, outside of his expectations.

Now, as a matter of fact, the preacher had been informed in a roundabout way of the whole matter even before he had left his home on the Kentucky side. (Nobody so close to the river as this ever spoke of anyone, unless indeed far down in the state, as living in Kentucky. It was always "on the Kentucky side.") And the prospective events at the Old Plantation had been the subject of conversation with a family on whom the preacher had called not an hour before.

But "Brother Charles" was welcome. Both Garrett and his son declared how glad they were that they could have the greetings and felicitations of the preacher on this happy day.

"And how proper it is," said the old professor half seriously and with a kind of smile, of which no one could ever be quite sure of the significance, "that such an important day in the family history as this has the presence of the minister to impart to the events a kind of sanctity and priestly auspice."

With this, Mr. Warner began to feel as if, after all, he really had some business there, though he did not seem at ease and was far from acting like a priest. He acted more like a boy. Boyish indeed was his personal appearance, though he was of manly stature and something over twenty-five years old. He realized this fact of his youthful appearance, and sought to offset it, since he was a preacher, by a careful gravity

of deportment. It is likely that to this was due also a manner in the pulpit that, except when he forgot himself, was grossly affected. It probably explains why he pronounced Jerusalem "Gee-rooz-alum."

It was not a pleasure to him that in the whole neighborhood of Good Hope church he was known as "Brother Charles." This nickname, if such it can be called, was a matter in which he himself had overshot the mark. A couple of years before this he had told Bertha to call him that. She laughed at the suggestion in such a pretty way that he was greatly pleased and she immediately took up with it, much to his satisfaction. But from the Garrett house it spread. All the other girls of the neighborhood began to say "Brother Charles," and then the older people, so that now he was commonly so addressed and mentioned.

Prof. Bland took it for granted that he had heretofore been mistaken as to Mr. Warner's name, and now addressed him as Mr. Charles, but, discovering presently that this appellation was based on a familiarity which his meagre acquaintance with the preacher would not justify him in assuming, he was careful next time to say very distinctly "Brother Warner," and so continued to do throughout the day. On this account the preacher was exceedingly grateful because for some reason he had the notion that on this day above all others he must be upon his dignity and affect a seriousness of a degree scarcely inferior to that which he thought becoming in the pulpit.

It was by mere accident that Bertha and Mr. Warner

were seated side by side at the dinner table, while the chairs of Prof. Bland and "Shiftless Henry" were together on the other side. For a moment "Shif" thought that he, too, was going to be at Bertha's elbow, but this would require that Walter and his wife be seated apart. There was some pleasant discussion on this point, settled by Prof. Bland who declared that "two bosoms interchained with an oath" should not be separated. So, mentally grumbling at chains and oaths, "Shif" lost the coveted place.

As Old Maggie brought in a fine potato soup seasoned with thyme, which was always kept growing in the garden and which was a favorite relish with Abner Garrett, the professor asked:

"Bertha, do you 'know a bank on which the wild thyme blows, where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows'?" And as he said this he peered at the girl from beneath his shaggy eyebrows and smiled—his old, old smile.

"Oh, yes," replied the girl gaily, "We have that very bank in our garden, but the thyme has been there so long that it must be tame."

"And does there sleep Titania at some time of night, lulled in these flowers by music and delight? We must hope she never will awake to love an ass."

Now, for some reason this remark made the preacher feel uncomfortable, but he managed to laugh with all the others, not noticing, as he might, that "Shiftless" was more keenly amused than all the rest, just as if there were in it somewhere a plain and pointed joke.



"A great thing to know the poetth thometimeth," said Henry.

"But," resumed the professor, "little Puck has told me that she shall not."

"Now, Professor, not another word," said Bertha playfully, and raising a finger at the old man.

"Oh, go on, Professor," besought Ida.

"I see you have not yet lost your interest in such matters," said Garrett to his daughter-in-law.

"Yes," said the elder Mrs. Garrett, "we want to know all about her doin's. No tellin' what these chil'en do when they go off to school." And with a sly wink she nudged Walter.

"Not going to be surprised next time, Mother?" said Walter.

"No, we'll keep a better look-out again."

"Yes, we must know all about Bertha; she's ours, you know," remarked "Brother Charles" with what he meant to be a very grave smile, at the same time turning his face toward the girl, who had been trying to laugh away a blush which, if she had known how sweetly it became her, she might have wished to keep.

"But would I not be bold to proceed under such an injunction?" answered the professor. "Besides, I have no secrets to tell on Bertha, and girls so love, I am told, to tell their own."

The professor had really no sort of proper justification for his hint, though no doubt he himself thought he had. He imagined that he had detected in young Jim Pressley, one of his pupils at the college, a genuine

fondness for Bertha, which was not unreciprocated. He had seen them studying together and walking together, as boys and girls will at school. He knew that they had gone to a picnic together and to a berry-picking, and finally one evening—he might have called it late though it really was not—while going back to his lonely room after a visit with a friend, he encountered the two at a certain gate on the college grounds through which he must pass. That quite settled it in his mind. They might have studied and walked together and “kept company” still longer possibly without their actions leading him to a conviction as to the nature of their friendship, though he would not have failed to notice these things; but the gate episode was decisive. The old man had read much about lovers and gates, and had come to think of a gate as the only proper swinging or revolving altar over which mutual troth should be plighted. Certainly this was the only purpose for which a young couple would in the eventide linger at a gate.

Poor old Professor Bland! He had a sensitive soul that loved the clouds and the light, flowers and music, poetry, romance and beauty; to whom, indeed, earth did seem “crammed with heaven and every common bush afire with God.” Hopelessly lamenting, like a Byron, his bodily imperfections; hurt, yet forgiving, by any look that seemed to take note of his deformity, he had more than once, in confidential moments, deeply touched his listeners by expressing a longing for the time to hasten and come when he might lay aside his

poor, lame body of flesh, and be clothed with a perfect and celestial body. Once a tear was seen in his eye as he lingered over a picture of Apollo which he had shown to his class.

But his temper continued sweet. Woman ever remained to him the blessed mystery that she is to youth. He was always a little shy in her presence. Himself excluded from the lists of gallantry, he yet did not lose his interest in the tender affairs of young people. Without hope of a personal participation in the joys of love, he became the lover of all lovers, and every successful suitor, no matter how ordinary had been the wooing, or how ready the yielding, was in his eyes a conqueror. He threw the halo of romance about even every common courtship. Somehow every "yes" was a surrender, every bride a captive, and every wedding the celebration of a victory.

Both "Shiftless Henry" and the preacher were much disturbed by the innuendoes of the professor. So bad did "Brother Charles" feel that he immediately began to talk about "the church." He asked about the next Coffee Creek Baptist association and the success that Brother Stillwell was having at Mud Lick.

While the conversation then became general regarding Walter's plans, Ida's family, matters at College Hill and Dan's boat, Old Maggie kept coming and going with her tray, showing a partiality, which a spectator might have observed, for Bertha. — Once she forgot herself and served Bertha first.

"To Ida," said Bertha, lifting the plate.

"She must have taken you for the bride, Bertha," said Mrs. Garrett; at which there was a little laugh on the part of all, a little blush on the part of the preacher and a little fidgeting on the part of "Shiftless Henry."

"Oh, Maggie, you know, is very fond of Bertha," remarked Mr. Garrett with much deliberation.

The preacher announced quite abruptly that he was not sure but that he ought to drop his work at this charge.

"Indeed?" responded Mr. Garrett, and looked at the preacher inquiringly.

"Why, 'Brother Charlie'!" exclaimed Bertha protestingly and very quickly.

It relieved the preacher, but it was a shock to "Shiftless Henry," just as if Bertha had been some pretty cloud in human form, and lightning had proceeded from her. He was disconcerted. He was during these two or three hours experiencing emotions that wrought with might through the texture of his slow-moving mind.

While he was recovering his composure, "Brother Charles" went on to say, not with the greatest sincerity, that he had thought perhaps he was not covering the field as well as another might.

Who ever knew a preacher, and especially a young one, who did not talk about the "field"?

"Oh, I think so," said Abner Garrett reassuringly.

"Of course you are," remarked Bertha with emphasis. as settling the matter for good and all.

Whereat the preacher's spirits took a lighter turn,



so that he fell into pleasantries respecting the prenuptial affairs of Walter and Ida, concluding with a reference to their trip to New Orleans and the remark that it was evident they were to embark not on the sea but the river of matrimony.

"A safer thing to do, perhaps," said Prof. Bland. "Always near to land and less danger of shipwreck."

While Henry proceeded to tell how many boats had foundered or been burned on the Ohio the professor took from his coat a bit of newspaper in which he carefully wrapped a piece of apple pie. A moment later, when the company arose from the table, he slipped the mushy package into his coat-tail pocket, access to which had now become convenient. He was plainly much mortified an instant afterward on discovering his absent-mindedness, for it was his habit to thus carry pie from his boarding place to his school-room for lunch. It was with a face as red with shame as that of a school girl that he replaced the package on the table, saying: "How forgetful. This is no school day and I need no lunch," and, then adroitly, and with a bow to Mrs. Garrett: "but the pie is so good that anyone might have wished to carry away a piece."

Walter proposed to take Ida for a walk of an hour about the plantation, and Bertha invited the professor down into the wood in front of the house to see her little Niagara, as she called it, in the dell. "Brother Charles" and "Shiftless Henry" accompanied them. They were some little distance down the declivity when the professor stopped and leaned hard back upon

his crutch while he turned his beaming face upward and around. Already his mind was full of the Forest Hymn. He quoted with much feeling and expression:

Here is continual worship—nature here  
In the tranquility that thou dost love  
Enjoys thy presence.

\* \* \*

My heart is awed within me when I think  
Of the great miracle that still goes on  
In silence round me.

At which the boy preacher looked exceedingly grave, and said: "Yes, indeed."

Henry was much impressed with the solemn air of the professor who, he imagined, was doing some act of consecration. It caused him to call to mind a camp-meeting he had once attended.

"I can beat you there, 'Shif,'" cried Bertha vivaciously, pointing to the little waterfall now plainly in sight, and starting onward at a lively pace.

Though confused at the suddenness of the challenge and the quick call of his thought from camp-meeting to contest, Henry accepted with what was certainly a very reasonable promptness for him, and for the first time in at least a dozen years found himself running, and that too, down hill over flat rocks and loose earth. But Bertha won easily. Henry was quite out of breath when he reached the fall, and said in an amusingly pleading way:

"Now, Bertha, I think you might—tell me who thith—little Puck ith up there—that Profethor Bland talkth about."

Bertha drew a long breath of surprise, and laughed at him with a truly beautiful and feminine hilarity.

"Oh, he is a mischievous little fellow," she at length replied.

"He don't know anything about your affairth, doth he?"

"He may know more than I do myself."

"I thought so," said Henry, trying to feel that the stranger really knew nothing; but he was not entirely satisfied, and when he had a private opportunity he asked Prof. Bland about this Mr. Puck.

The professor, though much amused, answered as an instructor might to a schoolboy.

"Why, have you not heard of the meddlesome little fellow who can go round the earth in forty minutes?"

"Oh, yeth," replied Henry, realizing at last that there must be some play in the matter and Puck a part of the poetry the professor had used when the dinner began.

"What book can I get to read about him?" the new pupil inquired, and a few days later "Shiftless Henry" might have been seen ransacking the township library copy of Shakespeare for mention of Puck.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Shiftless" had been hoping, as the time for going to the river approached, that he might ride alone with Bertha in the one-seated top-buggy, but he was doomed to bitter disappointment—the bitterest, because this great pleasure fell, it just so happened, to the lot of

"Brother Charles" whom only today Henry had come to look on as a rival.

Dan's entry upon the career of a river man had aroused great interest, and the fame of his boat was spread far and wide in the region of his home. Some had "heard" that it was the largest boat on the river; others that it had both an up and a down speed that were not matched, and all sorts of qualities not usually belonging to boats were ascribed to it. Such a thing as its arrival at The Landing, owned as it was by a home man whom they all knew, was a notable event, and so, not only the Garretts, but several score of their neighbors were at the riverside to cheer the handsome steamer as she bore in toward the little wharf, resplendent in her yet untarnished paint and bedecked with flags from bow to stern.

Underneath the window of the pilot house was the name, ABNER GARRETT, the first announcement to Dan's family of the christening of the boat, for he had kept this as a surprise for his father. Dan stood on the lower deck as proud as a Columbus returning home after the discovery of a continent, and no majesty's servant ever received at court a more flattering and grateful reception than he from the company on the wharf. In the minds of the simple country people he had become a water king.

The whole company was invited aboard to inspect the boat. When the last person was on, the gang plank was drawn in, and the boat pushed out into the stream. There was much fright and some screaming



before the playful Dan allowed it to be plainly understood that he was no pirate, but simply wanted his friends to have a ride with him.

"Four or five miles up and back," said he to his captain, and while the voyage was in progress the delighted excursionists promenaded the decks, peered into the state rooms and the boiler rooms, and watched the big wheel turn. Dan, of course, took special charge of the family party. He was in rollicking mood. He showed them the specialties he had put in the room which Walter and Ida were to occupy, saying that he would have a bridal chamber for one trip at least and promising to reserve it for awhile "if any of you other people want to get married."

"Shif" allowed that this "wath enough to make a man hurry up."

"I tell you, Dan," said Bertha, "you know I'm going to see Walter and Ida in two or three months, and you keep this room for me."

"But will you bring a husband along?" he asked mischievously, while all laughed—all but "Shif" who simply grinned broadly and waited intently for Bertha's reply to what he thought was a perfectly rational, straightforward and matter-of-fact question.

"No, of course not," Bertha said, "but I'll promise to dream about orange blossoms all the way down to New Orleans if you'll let me have the room."

As the boat was nearing The Landing Abner Garrett called Dan aside and said quietly: "You better change the name of the boat."

Dan felt hurt at the suggestion because it seemed to indicate that his father did not appreciate the compliment, which he had hoped would please him.

"Why, father?" he asked.

"You might, you know, have better luck under some other name," answered Mr. Garrett with such an air that Dan could not tell whether he were serious or in fun.

He guessed the latter and replied only:

"No, that name stays on. It'll bring luck. I'll take my chances under it."

And when the temporary passengers had disembarked, the boat steamed on down the river, Walter and Ida waving their handkerchiefs until they disappeared around a bend in the stream.

As "Brother Charles" and Bertha were nearing the house on the return, he said to her:

"I wish you might have an orange blossom dream right away, in which I stood by your side, and that when the time came I might accompany you to New Orleans."

"Do you want me, then, to have a troubled dream?" asked Bertha with softened protest.

"Would that be a troubled dream?"

"I'm afraid it would. Indeed, I know it would," said the girl with more seriousness.

"You are so young yet that your affections couldn't have been centered on anyone by this time?" ventured the preacher half affirmatively and half inquisitively.

"Too young, of course, to have thought about such

things at all—or to begin to think about them now,” replied Bertha in a tone implying that the present conversation was the most unreasonable thing in the world.

“Not to make a beginning—just a very beginning. Perhaps if you thought about it awhile, in your waking hours, the dream would then come to you with the vividness and power of a vision, and be welcome.”

“Oh, I’m afraid of visions!” exclaimed Bertha with a feigned shudder.

Her reverend suitor sought to be more impressive.

“Bertha, you were cut out to be a minister’s wife”—

“I never dreamed that!” Bertha claimed the fact quickly and eagerly as being to her advantage.

“And I think you were cut out to be my wife,” the preacher went on gravely. “I did not think you would be prepared at this time to make a response to what I have said, but I wanted you to know that I love you, Bertha, and I will be the happiest man in the world when you tell me that you love me. You think about it. I would even like to have you pray over it. Try to imagine what a noble work a minister’s wife can do. Then, after a while, perhaps you’ll dream that dream and some time we’ll go together to New Orleans.”

“No, when I come to orange blossoms none but you can be the officiating clergyman. I might put you in the dream that way.”

“I should want a more vital interest in the occasion.”

“And besides,” Bertha went on triumphantly,

"your relation to me has been fixed for some time. You would not want to be simply Charlie. You must always be Brother Charlie."

"Oh, no, that isn't good enough," pleaded the pastor as he brought the horse to a stop at the front gate.



## CHAPTER VI.

### IN A CEMETERY BUT NOT SAD.

"HERE we come once more to our temple and our altar," said Jim Pressley to Bertha, "and let us not pass it without stopping to offer our propitiation, for the old gentleman saw us as we started away and has probably kept his eyes on us. If he sees us stop here he will think we have not forgotten to seek Sunday edification in serious things and will excuse us. Let us make a respectful pause and gaze reverently on what is before us."

"Jim!" said Bertha in the manner of reproof, so that there was a whole condemnatory sentence in just this utterance of his name, but the rebuke was attended by such a bewitching portion of forgiving sweetness that he would have been glad to thus transgress all day for the reward of the like charming protestation.

They stopped before two tall tombstones that stood like saintly sentinels within a small, four-walled redoubt of rough stone masonry. The monuments could be seen above the parapet a long distance away fixed in calm and steadfast vigil.

The youthful couple, leaning against the low wall, looked down into the now familiar court of this mortuary castle. The mounds and the flat ground around them were covered with a thick matting of verdant

myrtle, the vines crossing and recrossing each other in manifold entanglement, because while full of vigor they were hopelessly restrained by the stern barriers from creeping away from the solemn place of their confinement.

A dozen sugar maples shaded the spot, which was on the summit of a hill separated by a wide and deep ravine from the hill on which the college building, the boarding house and the president's house stood, and in view of them all. It was by itself, detached, and in the rear of a graveyard that occupied the slope running down to the road.

In this enclosure were the graves of the president's father and mother. His attachment to his father, with whom he had collaborated in establishing the college, had been unusually strong, so that this place of rest was the more hallowed in his eyes and oft visited by him.

On the father's tombstone, beneath the name and dates, was an inscription which Jim now, as he had done several times before, read aloud:

"My flesh shall slumber in the ground  
Till the last trumpet's joyful sound;  
Then burst the chains with sweet surprise,  
And in my Savior's image rise.  
Oh, glorious hour! Oh, blest abode!  
I shall be near and like my God.

"There, that concludes our ceremony," said Jim.  
"Now we may go on."

"Jim, really it is too much of a mockery," said Bertha as if she at least half meant it.

Bertha roomed and boarded at Rev. President Boyce's house. He was an austere man who had very strict notions of what was proper conduct for people of all ages, and was exceedingly severe when concerned with anything like levity or giddiness in the young.

Especially did President Boyce feel called upon to maintain a close watch over any communications, except of the most indifferent sort, between the sexes. In no respect was his nature so stern as in these very matters. There was always a kind of battle going on between the young people and him on this account. He discouraged, but they pressed forward. They dared and he scowled. He was reputed by some whom he had offended to hold that any protracted politeness or entertaining conduct on the part of a boy toward a girl was a sign that he was losing his head and getting into a perilous snare.

He used to deliver precepts and admonitions touching these things in the school room to faintly smiling and unappreciative audiences. Students were there to study, he was wont to say, and not to "gad about." It was his habit on evenings when the literary society met to take a front, side seat, the better to see, it was believed, who came in with whom, how the girls and boys acted toward each other, and to take the exact temperature, so far as possible, of any intimacies of a special or suspected sort.

As may be imagined, therefore, the president's

house was not a hospitable place for beaux and gallants. Jim probably fared better than any other young fellow would, for Mr. Boyce liked him and thought him more mature than most young men of his age. He also had much respect for Bertha's good sense, but Jim did not try to spend an evening with Bertha there after the first attempt. On that occasion they had been alone in the parlor not longer than ten minutes when Mr. Boyce entered in the most matter of course manner, and, by making the company three, made it none.

However, Jim adopted admirable tactics. He would not permit it to appear that he was put out, but sailed the channel into which his bark had been diverted with a fictitious zest that could not have been distinguished from genuine enthusiasm. He found the president an exceedingly interesting man, and himself in surprising concordance with his views on a wide range of matters. He carried every theme a little beyond where Mr. Boyce seemed about to leave it, and if through some indiscreet impetuosity he hazarded at first hand an affirmative proposition, and the president dissented, he contrived to agree with his adversary quickly.

Bertha kept her boat trimmed with equal skill.

Mr. Boyce stood in the door with Bertha when Jim made his adieux, and turning about with a yawn, and scratching his head, remarked:

"A young man of considerable promise. He seems to have thought to some purpose on a number of matters."

Bertha, as she should have done, conveyed the



compliment to Jim, but, though pleased with the success of his maneuvers, he did not desire to risk a repetition of just that kind of interview.

He and Bertha took more to walking out, and, as lovers for some reason are prone to do, in walking out they took to the tombs. Maybe in this case it was because the graveyard, though not far away, was a sequestered spot, a pretty place, and on the way down to the winding and the wooded, the shallow and the rocky creek.

They were there one Sunday—the first or second time—when over the hill, which they had left but a little while before, they saw Mr. Boyce evidently headed their way.

“Bertha, when he gets down in the hollow,” said Jim, “let’s go up and be found looking at his father’s grave.”

“And why?”

“Why, then, maybe, he’ll think it’s all right for us to be out here together. It will disarm him. It will propitiate him.”

And so they went, and so he found them looking very seriously, and, to tell the truth, not by any means without seriousness, at the monumental marble.

It did commend them to him. There was no reproof in his face as he came up. He did not make his eyebrows two clouds. He thought they had done well to halt there, and Jim many times gravely nodded his head while Mr. Boyce spoke in a solemn half-soliloquy about the good works and the manly traits of his father.

After some silence that followed Mr. Boyce asked: "Are you out for an extended walk?"

"We had thought of taking a little ramble," Jim replied.

"You will find a number of pleasant places up along the creek yonder," said Mr. Boyce.

"Perhaps we won't go farther than down here," said Jim, pointing to the graveyard, "and take a walk up the creek another time."

The president gave a jerk of the head as if to say "Just as you please."

Presently the young couple moved rather awkwardly away and went down into the graveyard again.

"Worked like a charm," said Jim. "We must stop there every time we come over this way, and perhaps, whatever direction we take, we better always start this way."

"Jim, I believe you're wicked," said Bertha with a grimace that showed she did not believe it at all.

And so that is why it was that, through Jim's humor, he and Bertha were at these graves on the day with which this chapter opens and to which we have finally returned.

"Let's not do it any more," said Bertha as they descended into the cemetery. "We've joked it out now, don't you think so?"

"You haven't joked much about it at any time. You've let me do it all. Now you do some yourself."

"I've kept you close company in it. I really do think it was a good thing for us to be found there that

day Mr. Boyce came over. I believe it was just that that reconciled him for good and all to my 'gadding about,' because he's never said a word to me about it."

"Of course. Just think, Bertha, what we owe to those old people up there who never saw us. Why"—

"Owe to them? A debt we can never pay."

"Because they're dead, I suppose. Why, they've saved us"—

"Yes, they died for us."

"Call me wicked? What are you? They've saved us from we don't know how much annoyance, and we can never thank them"—

"Not 'till the last trumpet's joyful sound,' and we ought to be up very early that morning and hasten to make our acknowledgments to them."

"Never thank them as their great services"—

"Why, to be sure, the elder Boyce was a preacher, too, wasn't he, and used to hold services."

"Their great services require. What a picture"—

"Yes, I intend to get a photograph of it."

"Do it, Bertha, do it, and get a big one. We'll frame it and hang it up as a companion piece to our marriage certificate. A pair of turtle doves on one side and a pair of tombstones, with a stone wall around them, on the other."

"It would really be very appropriate. We will be about as white and as solemn as tombstones when we stand up to be married, and the stone wall will signify that we can never be on this side of that event again."

"Now, Bertha, since it's going to be such a solemn

thing as all that, don't you think you better take the preacher?"

"Oh, that would make it unendurably solemn. That would be like marrying a tombstone, and I would feel that I lived in a church and heard about Je-rooz-alem every day."

"I'll tell you what it's really going to be like," said Jim with a face as full of fondness as ever that of a youth was—"with you and me I mean—it's going to be something beyond sermons and hymns and baptisms and churches, preachers, funerals and tombstones, and even the far-away heaven in the sky somewhere, for it's going to be a heaven on earth—not a high up, distant, hazy, angel, harp and pearly-gate heaven, but one you can enter by turning a plain door knob; made out of boards and plaster and pretty wall paper, carpets, rocking chairs, pictures, books, trees, grass and flowers and all the common materials we know. The best heaven the mind of man has ever conceived was located right here in this world. The old Garden of Eden, growing out of the familiar, ordinary dirt that children make mud pies out of, beat the heaven in the sky all to pieces. Man thought he was making his heaven the better the farther he got it away from him, but he made it worse. Old Peter had a dream for all the race when he saw the New Jerusalem descending down out of the sky to the solid earth. He seems to have had some idea that this was where it belonged. He was right. The heavens on earth are the thing, and angels without wings are the best kind, because they're



more likely to stay where they can do some good. It's too easy for the other kind to fly away from you."

"Why, Jim Pressley, I believe that I'm going to marry a preacher, after all, and a good one," cried the girl, "but you must remember that a heaven on earth is out of the question for a great many people. Just think of those so situated that they cannot possibly be very happy. Think of Prof. Bland."

"Yes, that's true," returned the young man thoughtfully, "Prof. Bland deserves to have a heaven all to himself if he wants it that way, and I suppose there are a great many just like him. Heavens are not thick enough, I know. Probably there would not be too many if there were one on every star, but if there were more in this world, how much more contented people would be, and if they only really tried to make them they could reach them without having to die to get to them."

They were now down in the part of the cemetery near the road, where, in the almost constant shade of a number of sturdy beeches, the gravestones had taken on a dull, dark green not unlike the bark on the neighboring trunks. Jim continued to be enraptured with his vision of an earthly paradise, and spoke, as his exalted spirit gave him utterance, to never so sympathetic an auditor.

"Oh, when we get that lamp with the porcelain shade," said Jim, as a kind of peroration and certainly as a reiteration, "and that big, round table with a green cloth, and are seated beside them, there will be no two

persons in the world so happy as you and I, will there, Bertha?" and he risked or defied or forgot altogether to think about the view of any human eye, and leaned over and kissed her.

"You mustn't leave out the lamp and the shade," said Bertha, "for it will be a very important part of your heaven. You can make a whole little universe with that. You see, the concave side of the shade will be the sky of the hearth and household. The flame of the lamp will be the sun, and think of all the dear little industries that will flourish in its soft light. Think what a pretty little world the big, dark world will then shut in. When the large sun sets then the little sun will rise. You shall start the tiny horses of a tiny Aurora with the crack of a match. We will forget the wider sky that covers the whole world and get under one the size only of our lampshade, that covers just you and me. That will be a world, I hope, we can comprehend. I hope there will be no unhappy person in that little world; and if we must ever be unhappy, Jim, let's be so while the big sun is shining and not after the little sun has risen under the lampshade."

Unhappiness seemed a thing so foreign to the world which had begun for Jim and to that which he believed he saw developing for him, that he was a little disturbed by the quiet seriousness of Bertha's last words.

"But we'll not be unhappy at all," said he. "At least we'll not make each other so; and I can picture a very pretty and sufficient world without even the table

and the lampshade. I see it now under the brim of your hat," and with his two hands he described a circle around her face.

"You'll get tired of that some day."

He protested he never would, never could.

There was a noise in a field of early corn across the rail fence thirty yards away, as if a stalk had been pulled down or a green ear ripped open.

"A groundhog, I guess," said Jim, and he threw a stone in that direction.

"So you wouldn't tell the preacher you were engaged," remarked Jim, inviting a repetition of certain passages in Bertha's narration of the events of the day when she was last at home, just as if they had not been full and explicit enough as given by her already several times over. "You might have saved yourself annoyance from him if you had."

"But Jim, he was not entitled to know," Bertha explained again. "It was enough for him to be told that I didn't want him, and when I had given him to understand that, it was an impertinence for him to ask me if my affections were 'centered on another,' as he put it."

"Of course it was," said Jim, yet wishing that she had said something to utterly crush "Brother Charles" and leave him without the faintest shadow of a hope or expectation.

"And he told you he was praying for it," Jim continued, "and that he thought you would make an excellent minister's wife; and for you to think how

useful you could be as a handmaid of the Lord; and that you were still young and could take plenty of time to think it over; and that you might consult your father and mother about it; and that it might not do any harm to find out what Old Maggie thought about it; and he could wait; and that he hoped you would in time see your way clear to become his wife."

These were not questions. They were rather a recapitulation. They needed no answer or correction or confirmation, and Bertha gave none, but kept silent all the while, smiling and looking love to the man who loved her.

"He must have thought that everybody around the place would urge you to accept him quick," Jim went on. "Oh, he'll be buzzing about you for a long time," and he gave Bertha a look as if to say that she had not fully calculated that part of it.

"Well, I must not be rude with him, you know," she said, "for he's always been friendly and is a nice fellow." And she added with a prettily shrewd look: "I don't believe he'll bother me very much."

Jim said he hoped not.

"But there is one thing I did not tell you," said Bertha.

"What is that?" asked Jim eagerly.

"He no doubt thought he was very cunning when he said that it might do no harm to find out what Old Maggie thought about it. He knows that she has seen me grow up from a baby and cared for me a great deal when I was a child. This has given him the notion,



I think, that she has a strong influence over me. Indeed I'm sure he has an exaggerated estimate of her importance in our family. Just as soon as he mentioned her that day I could remember that he had been paying more than usual attention to her in the last few months. One Sunday afternoon about a month ago—I guess all the rest of us had been taking a nap or something—I looked out of my window, and there he and Old Maggie were walking around in the garden, and in a little while they came sauntering along toward the house. She was carrying a little bouquet that he had picked for her, and seemed as honored and delighted as anyone could be. They did look comical. It seemed as if he might be trying to make love to her."

"That's your chance, Bertha," said Jim, laughing. "Tell him to marry Old Maggie."

"I wonder, too," said Bertha, as if a surprising idea had just come to her, "if from anything papa has been saying to him he has learned that papa and mamma talk over everything about me with Old Maggie; for they do, Jim, I know they do, because she often asks me questions and makes remarks about affairs of mine that could come to her knowledge only from what papa and mamma had told her. Of course it's all right, for she's interested in me and likes me, just as she does everyone in the family, but sometimes I think she's a little too inquisitive and meddlesome. Now, I wonder if 'Brother Charlie' knows anything about that."

"I wouldn't call him 'Brother Charlie' all the time," said Jim.

"Oh, that's just a little notion of his, and we've humored him and got in the habit of it," replied Bertha, noticing plainly enough that Jim's protest was based on a trifling jealousy which really did not merit the little conciliation she offered it.

"If he doesn't want to be called Mr. Warner, call him 'Brother Chump'; that will be all right," said Jim with a vindictive little emphasis.

"I'll call him Mr. Warner, that's what I'll do. I'm glad you spoke about it. For that will be a little cold now, you know, and that is what he needs."

"Just the thing to do," Jim quickly agreed, exulting that a blessed formality was at length to push the presuming preacher out of his comfortable relation as a familiar of Bertha's and especially out of the glorious position of seeming to be anything in the world like a pet of hers.

And now the well-pleased and triumphant Jim was prepared to talk again about marrying the preacher to Old Maggie.

"He went at you in regular military fashion," said he. "If he thought she was one of the outworks, and he seems to have thought she was, it was good tactics for him to try to get possession of her."

They were seated beneath a beech which had been scarred and seamed all over, from within two feet of the ground to up among the branches, with initials cut in the bark.

"'The groves were God's first temples,'" said Jim. "Having your name on a tree is next to having it on a

church register. Let's join the Druids and put our initials up there. That will be another rite for a Sunday afternoon."

Bertha assented, so, grasping a low limb, Jim swung himself up into the tree and cut their initials higher up on the trunk than any others. When he descended Bertha asked:

"Why didn't you tell me you were going to buy a new suit?"

"Buy a new suit? What makes you ask that?"

"Why, here's a measuring worm on you, and that's a sign you are to have a new suit of clothes. Now I must catch a butterfly—a pretty one—and bite its head off, and I'll have a new dress of its color. There comes one," and she began a chase for it.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AN INTRUDER.

THE two in the exuberance of their joy and youth were darting about hither and thither and running in all directions at once after the winged flower when they were startled by the sounds of footsteps in the gravel at the gate, and, looking in that direction, saw Gassler, the shoemaker, coming in. He was very red in the face, was grinning, and altogether looked sheepish. Possibly that is why Jim at once felt the suspicion that he might have been the groundhog in the corn, a suspicion, however, that a large bunch of ferns and wild flowers, which he had in his hand, would tend to alleviate.

"Little too lively fo' ye, eh?" he said as he jerkily nodded his head to our young friends. "Takes wings to ketch wings. Oh, them's sry little critters. But my, a butterfly'd ought to let such a person as you ketch it," grinning at Bertha harder than ever. "They'd ought to come and light on you and be glad of the chance."

Jim was surprised at the audacity and suddenness with which Gassler had trespassed on what he considered his own exclusive ground, and was quite confused.

Bertha, burning with blushes and almost overcome



with embarrassment—for Gassler continued to grin and gaze upon her—managed to say:

“Butterflies are very foolish things, whatever they do.”

“Just like some people, eh?” and Gassler laughed, or pretended to, while Jim and Bertha, feeling like doing something else, went through the mechanical part of smiling.

“When I see you in here from out there in the road,” said Gassler, “I couldn’t think of any better girl in the whole world to give these posies to, and so I’ve come in to give ’em to you.” And he proffered the wild flowers to Bertha.

Jim would have gloried in seeing her curtly refuse them, but she took them with a very indifferent “Thank you.”

Gassler then proceeded to tell where he had been in his afternoon ramble; where he had found this one of the wild flowers and where that one; where he had plucked up the ferns; where Bertha might find them if she went for them; and how few the wild flowers were in these parts compared with places in Kentucky; and, ingeniously marshalling a most remarkable host of petty and inconsequential minutiae—so it seemed to Bertha and Jim—he told a story insufferably longer than any to which these two people, together or apart, had ever in all their lives given compulsory attention.

And a somewhat singular circumstance was that he addressed himself almost exclusively to Bertha, glancing only now and then at Jim, not as recognizing that Jim

might be at all concerned in what was being said, but rather as watching him.

Bertha and Jim were not careful to conceal their impatience. Nor can there be any doubt that Gassler correctly interpreted their manner, but, far from abashing him, it seemed only to make him more eager to press forward in his discourse and to draw Bertha into conversation.

"I reckon you'll be glad when school's out," he said to her.

"Students usually are at the end of a school year, I believe," she answered.

"You'll be back next year?" he asked just as one would who was intensely interested in whether she would or not.

"I don't know," she replied.

"Not done? Not goin' anywhere else?"

"I can't say."

"You like it up here?"

"I think most of the students do."

"Folks are all well down below?"

"I hope so."

"I hear Walter's married."

Bertha chose to take this as simply a plain statement of fact, and made no response.

"It doesn't begin to make you think about your own turn?"

He said this as one might who was trying to banter her, and yet there was also something in his manner that suggested a serious and curious personal interest.

Bertha keenly felt that she was the victim of impertinence, and the impatience of herself and her lover was far on the way to indignation, which, however, they were still restrained from expressing, on account of a certain kindness, distinguished from ordinary friendliness, (for of that he had made a most awkward if not equivocal exhibition), which from the first had marked Gassler's manner.

Bertha hesitated for some moments in a struggle to overcome an impulse to answer with full rein to her feeling, and replied:

"I'm not so old as Walter."

"Goin' to bide your time. That's right.—I see you're fond of horseback ridin' down home, but never see you at it here. Seems like you've rather taken to walkin' here. Next year you just let me know whenever you'd like to take a horseback ride, an' I'll see 'at you get the horse.—Well, I been a good deal longer givin' you them flowers 'n I 'xpected to be. I'll have to be goin' on." And he walked away.

He had scarcely pushed the gate shut behind him when the wrathful Jim exclaimed:

"What infernal impudence!"

"There's another Sunday afternoon exercise for you," said Bertha. "I've been put through a catechism." And she hurled away Gassler's floral offering with disgusted vehemence.

It happened, though neither Bertha nor Jim noticed it, that the rejected flowers, expelled thus furiously from a hand so soft and delicate that the beautiful

blossoms could have found no fitter place, with their stems cut and torn, to wither and die in, yet fell gently and scattered, upon a child's grave.

"And to think that I had scarcely ever spoken to him before!" said Bertha.

"Your woes are coming all at once," said Jim. "The preacher and 'Shiftless Henry' and myself, and now Gassler. He is your fate."

"The silly old vagabond! What in the world did he mean?"

"He's smitten with you, Bertha. How long ago did you say it was that he first came to your neighborhood?"

"About two years I think. He has a little shop near the postoffice down there—a shop there and one here, and works part of the time at one and part of the time at the other. He has seen me frequently on horseback to get the mail down home, but never tried to do anything more than nod to me or say 'Good evening,' and he didn't get to do that very often, because I took care to avoid noticing him when I could. He associates with the lowest kind of people and his habits are bad. He doesn't know our folks at all, and I was as surprised as could be when he took a notion of speaking to me."

"But up here," said Jim, "he attends Sunday school and church and comes to our 'sings.'"

"And he spends his evenings with loafers," Bertha added.

They now retraced a large part of the way they had



come, and went to the college chapel where many of the students met every Sunday afternoon at half past four to sing. It was an informal entertainment of a very common concert character that a number of the village people were fond of attending, coming, as it did, at a time of the day when naps were over and drowsy minds were ready for an inspiring reawakening.

Bertha and Jim, since this was the last Sunday on which they were to be together for some time, would have been glad to absent themselves, but Bertha was the organist and on this account they felt obliged to be there.

Gassler had chanced to look back at the very moment when Bertha threw away the flowers. He determined to return and pick them up.

"She has thrown them away," he said to himself, "but they have been in her hand."

He stopped and pretended to be observing the view presented by the opposite bank of the creek, rocky and wooded, until Bertha and Jim had gone up the hill out of the cemetery and descended into the hollow in the pasture. He then went back to the spot where he had seen the flowers cast into the air. But he paused before the stone at the grave.

"Child buried here," he observed thoughtfully. "A child's grave. Then I'll leave 'em there."

And he, too, went to the college chapel.

Bertha and Jim were together again that evening.

"I believe he understood how we felt," said Bertha. "Did you notice how sad he looked all through the 'sing'?"

"Yes, he looked as if he had lost his only friend on earth," replied Jim. "He kept his eyes on you most of the time. Come to think of it, I've noticed him do that a good deal before. I overheard him say to Mr. Perry that you were a Number One player, and he brightened up a little when he said it. And Perry said to him: 'I allow she's Number One prett' near everything.'"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A NOTABLE FOURTH OF JULY.

THE same cause, the same sweet expectation, had never before shortened Jim's sleep on the morning of an Independence Day. He rose early on the Fourth of July, 1878. He had in years gone by been up earlier to ring a church bell or fire off the old army musket for which his brother had traded a fiddle, but the arousing agency this time was a calmer and deeper sentiment than the common, youthful, holiday enthusiasm.

Still he felt at moments the loss of what he had experienced on previous advents of this anniversary, and in one of the intervals, when his thoughts were off their lately constant theme, he became a parodist and wrote:

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our nation's birth is celebrated,  
The boy and cracker sleep near all night long;  
And then they get them up and 'gin to stir abroad;  
Their fellows join them. Then few crackers fail;  
Most of them burst and each hath power to charm,  
So boy-st'rous and so popping is the time.

"That is the way it is out in Iowa," thought Jim, "but it isn't the way here. Why, it comes nearer to describing Christmas here than the Fourth of July, for Christmas is when they have their firecrackers down

in this country. But I ought not to quarrel with this Fourth. I wonder what time Bertha and her people will get up here. I mustn't forget my speech. I'm glad father's not coming out—I wouldn't want him today, not today."

Jim then went to thinking again about the difference between a Fourth of July among the southern Hoosiers and the same occasion in his own beloved little town in eastern Iowa. On the evening before, notwithstanding a celebration had been arranged for, none of the premonitory demonstrations to which he had been accustomed were to be seen or heard. No small, impatient boy was testing by samples the virtue of his bunch of firecrackers or proving the capacity of his popgun for making noise. No band was heard rehearsing. No flag was unfurled to herald the approach of the day on which the Star Spangled Banner always waves most inspiringly. No charming maiden could be seen, as the sun went down, seated under her father's trees, arranging the ribbons of her pretty hat so as to produce the best holiday effect.

This, to Jim's mind, was all wrong. The people should be more interested, thought he. And it was strange that among the children even there was no sign of delightful excitement. Old musket and anvil firing, bell ringing, and ragamuffin memories came trooping up; and memories less boyish—pleasant recreations in shaded groves, picnic associations, the annual conspiracy with friends to seize a large booty of fun and enjoyment.



"Still," said Jim as he looked out over the village from the window of his room on the hill, "the natives"—he frequently called them the natives—"the natives have prepared to celebrate this holiday with vast and appropriate ceremonies, and I have consented to figure on the occasion as the patron and interpreter of that time-honored charter, the Declaration of Independence. Not going to dispose of it in the usual way by solemnly reading it, but make it the text and chapter of a discourse. I am to hold it up to honor before the multitude, expatiate with fervor upon its import, and, after calling in review Jefferson and the signers of the instrument and giving them a few handsome turns, remand them for another year to the quieter enjoyment of their blessed and glorious immortality. That will be good"—but Jim almost wished—yes, he did really wish—that he had not agreed to do it, for he feared—he was convinced—that it would not give him as much time for something else as he was sure he would desire.

He then ran over in his mind the steps leading up to the celebration. It was an unusual undertaking for College Hill or its vicinity, and had not been finally determined on without difficulty. Several obstacles caused the advancing spirit of patriotism to stumble. There was want of harmony and a great diversity of sentiment as to the distribution of honors.

The design originated with a debating club which, until spring work on the farms began, had held regular meetings in a big schoolhouse a half mile outside the

village. The club had a called meeting and resolved to celebrate. Twelve committees were appointed, no less a number than this being commensurate with the ambitions of the members severally and collectively, for no one in the club could have suffered his fellows to be exalted above himself. By the happy contrivance of many committees each member was raised to the dignity of a committee-man, a distinction which he prized as highly as in old times an Englishman, just returned with a fortune from the Indies, would have rated a peerage.

The committee to choose a scene for the grand affair waited on a young storekeeper to ascertain on what conditions he would allow the use of a piece of woods owned by him.

"Well, you can have the grove," he said, "if you don't have any dancin', and if you're goin' to have stands and charge fur 'em I want my pick of a place fur a stand, and I'll charge you ten dollars fur the grove; but if you're going to have it free fur everybody you can have the grove fur nothin', only I don't want any dancin'."

The storekeeper was a United Presbyterian, hence the dancing stipulation would not have been remarkable had it not been that the young man himself had indulged occasionally in the joyful practice of spreading music out on the floor with the ends of his toes. He might have been less pronounced on this point had he not been cautioned beforehand to be firm by his mother and young wife who were uncompromisingly opposed

to the amusement, the first on account of her age and the latter on account of her principles.

The committee intimated that the storekeeper was illiberal, and applied to a Methodist brother who owned twenty acres of beeches adjoining the site first desired. Now, there was no Methodist church in the vicinity, and the man was known as one without intimate "religious connections"—which, by the way, have often been found embarrassing. To the inquiries of the committee this kind and sympathetic man responded:

"Well, I 'low you can have my woods for nothing, and dance your heels off if you want to."

This was certainly all the committee could desire, but for some reason the whole project for which the twelve committees had been named was abandoned. The pleasant expectations of the inhabitants of the village and the country round that there would be some fine "doin's" were annihilated.

At this contingency, fatal alike to an interesting holiday and to growth in patriotic grace, two energetic and brave-hearted men came to the rescue. One was a jingling disciple of Dives and the other a pounding son of Vulcan. They put their heads together and decided to buy out and forge out a finished article. They determined to make all the arrangements themselves. They were promised the use of a beech grove just outside the hamlet, although, much to the distress of many, with the unwelcome understanding that there was to be no dancing—for they had struck another Presbyterian.

The hopes of the villagers revived. The wives began to bake cakes. Though the efforts of the debating club had been unavailing, the club was not ignored. It was honored and its good will won by the selection of its chief to be president of the day and master of ceremonies.

And now the wagons of lumber going to the grounds, the sounds of boards and of hammers, indicate that the speakers will have a platform to speak from, that the people will have seats to sit on, and, above all, that the huckster and the blacksmith have had eyes to business, for the most of the noise has recorded the growth of a spacious stand down yonder beneath the beeches, over the counters of which will be exchanged sweetmeats and dimes. The hammering and the placing of planks continue to the very eve of the eventful day. These are the only signs of preparation.

Jim was out walking back and forth on the broad, beaten path leading from the boarding house to the college, mumbling over his speech, when, an hour after sunrise, a loud report came from down the stony road.

There was no mistaking it though it was delayed. It was the firing of the anvils and made Jim a very boy again. Bareheaded as he was, he went on the run to the blacksmith shop and was more excited than the smith or the half dozen hurriedly-dressed lads who hastily gathered about while the next charge was put in, the anvils again doubled and the paper a second time lighted.

"Well, now again," cried Jim when the conveniently



improvised artillery boomed once more the suggestion of Bunker Hill and all the glorious battles of American history. "Keep her up," he shouted.

"No more powder," said the blacksmith.

Jim was disgusted, but kept his feelings to himself.

"I'll get some more," he said, and started off, running for the huckster's store just over the creek, making his way across the shallow water rather than to take time to run up stream to the foot-bridge.

He came back with such a package of powder as made the boys open their eyes, and with the greater part of the little stock of firecrackers that the huckster had on hand. He threw a bunch of crackers to each boy, saying: "Open 'em up and set 'em going," and then joined the smith in producing the heavier detonations with the anvils. It was a lively half hour on the corner, and Jim felt himself to be a missionary of patriotism.

"More powder 'n I've smelt fur fourteen year," said the shoemaker, who had been standing quietly by smoking a pipe. "Yes, sir 'n since the war. Ol' Morgan's men smelt 'nough of it then I can tell ye. We was through this here country right here, too—few miles south and north.

"Big day fur fellers and their gals, I reckon," continued Gassler. "Say, Jim, I don't wonder you're feelin' peert 's morning. Y'll have the finest gal in the hull pack, eh?"

Jim was not pleased with what was said. He felt that any reference to Bertha by Gassler was a kind of

contamination of her, and altogether he did not like the familiarity the man had assumed. He therefore asked soberly:

"How do you know with whom I'll be?"

"Oh, I've got eyes in my head," Gassler replied, smiling and with a nod. "I can see what's going on." And Jim's feeling suddenly changed so far that he was foolish enough to be a little gratified at even such a recognition of his position.

What Jim wanted to find out was how it was that the shoemaker happened to be acquainted with Bertha's plans, but he was not inclined to ask more questions and contented himself with supposing that Bertha had told some of her girl friends and Gassler had heard it as gossip in his shop or at the store, for Bertha, on going home at the close of the term in the very last days of June, had promised she would come up to the celebration.

"You may be right," was all Jim said as he started away, leaving Gassler plainly eager to continue the conversation.

Jim got back to the boarding house just as Prof. Bland came hobbling out on the low, sunken flagstones to squint at the sun and sniff the morning air. The noise had first awakened and then delighted him.

"I see you have been down to listen close by to Freedom's annual proclamation," he said to Jim. "This is the day when

"Cannon to cannon shall repeat her praise,  
Banner to banner flap it forth in flame."

" 'Tis grand that on this day all men may hear  
How terrible the voice of Liberty may be,  
When, on the ears of tyrants bursting near,  
It says in thunder that a people shall be free."

"Hardly an annual proclamation here, is it?" asked Jim. "I'm sure it's done more thundering in this little place this morning than it ever did before, but where is the 'Banner to banner' part of it? We ought to have a flag but I have none. Let's see if Mrs."—

"I have a small one," said the professor, and with such haste as he could he went back into the house and presently reappeared with a flag carefully wrapped in paper. It was small, as he had said, but of silk and with all the colors bright.

"Pretty one!" exclaimed Jim as he unrolled it and held it high in the air.

"Given me," the professor said with some pride, "by the students here the night they played a little drama which I wrote, entitled 'The Great Rebellion.' It was soon after the war. I was sorry we played it, for several people, and they were my friends, too, were offended because I made Jeff Davis quote, as applicable to himself, the language of Satan:

" 'Me miserable, which way shall I fly  
Infinite wrath and infinite despair?  
Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell.' "

Jim said that he must read the drama. The professor told him that the manuscript had been lost. "But," he continued, "here is the flag with 'not a stripe

erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured.'"

It so happened that the flag had not for many a year been hung out to the breeze, and its singular old owner, as he moved about talking with Jim, looked up at it from time to time with beaming eyes. It mattered not that Jim had found no loftier place for it than the top of a high gate post. That was just as good as a house gable or a staff; better, the professor felt, for there it was near at hand and people going in and out would pass close under it, and, besides, in so lowly and common a place it seemed to more properly represent the sentiment of the home. It domesticated patriotism.

Breakfast over, Prof. Bland and Jim took chairs in the cool morning shade at the west of the house, a place commanding a view of the road running by the woods in which the celebration was to be held. Jim had brought down the paper on which he had scribbled the parody, and read the lines to his teacher, who was as much amused as anyone might be by such a performance. Very well it was, he said to Jim, that so great a poet as Shakespeare should be made in any way to contribute to so grand a theme as the Fourth of July.

In the year that Jim had attended school at College Hill he and the professor had come to be warm friends and were often together. Jim was one of those rare young people who enjoy the society of their elders as much as association with companions of their own age, and, besides, he found the professor, with his deformity and all his oddities, intensely interesting. He loved to observe the expression and feeling with which he quoted



poetry and talked about the souls of great writers of both prose and verse. He was amused and entertained by many of the old-fashioned, pedagogic manners of the professor and perhaps he was attracted most of all by the mystery that seemed to surround the inner life of the old man, for with respect to himself and his family connections the professor was always silent. He seemed never to have had a brother or sister or relative, though there was a rumor that out of his meager means he was supporting a helpless sister somewhere.

Jim was a favorite with the professor on account of the young man's buoyant and hopeful spirit, the intelligence with which he discussed subjects which often those of his age had not begun to think about, and the interest he took in all the professor said. Perhaps the professor also felt, without being really conscious of it, that there was sympathy for him in the youth's heart, for Jim was discerning enough to have perceived that in the history of Prof. Bland's life, though the record could not be easily read, there had been many a bitter chapter.

Since daylight the huckster's wagon had been rattling back and forth between his store and the grounds.

"I see that the huckster is very diligent in getting the grounds prepared for us today," said the professor. "I hope we will have a good time, for it has been a number of years since we attempted to have a celebration here."

"I would have liked it better," Jim said, "if the arrangements had not been left alone to the huckster

and the blacksmith, for their interest seems to be too mercenary."

"But somebody must always take the lead in such a matter," the professor replied, "and I suppose the two men are entitled to compensation some way for their time and pains, and they cannot hope to make a great amount. Even if their interest is only personal, I would rather have this celebration than none at all."

"So would I," said Jim, thinking that it was only this that gave him an opportunity to see Bertha again so soon; "for," he added, "it will be a good thing for the people."

"Do you know that Miss Bertha and some of her family are coming up?" asked the professor.

Jim blushed, and answered, as if it were nothing at all in the world: "Yes, she told me the day she went home."

"She is developing into an elegant lady and I am glad she is evidently a little fond of us up here."

The implication of a diffusion of the girl's affection touched a jealous nerve in Jim and impelled him to say:

"She told me she must come up to hear my speech."

"Ah? Well, I have no doubt it will be worth coming some distance to hear."

"Far from it, Professor, but did she tell you, too, that she was coming up?"

"No, I heard it from Mr. Gassler. He has lived more or less in her neighborhood, and, being down there a few days ago, happened to hear something said about her coming. I think it was last Sunday probably.

"And Mr. Gassler told me, that he guessed that there

was a special attraction for Bertha here since you were to remain over the Fourth"; and he looked at Jim very pleasantly. "You know her parents and family?" he added.

"No, I have not met them yet."

"Yet?" and the professor turned his face triumphantly toward the young man. And then, as if fully satisfied: "You will find them very pleasant and interesting people."

Jim was laughing a little at himself and his "yet," which he told the professor might, after all, mean nothing, but he spoke as if suggesting only that he have the benefit of a doubt. He felt not a little gratified that there appeared to be no question with the professor but that he was full old enough to have to do seriously with such matters.

By this time the people who lived at some distance were beginning to gather at the grove, and Jim was interested in observing the "outfits" as they passed up the road. It was not a region where prosperity attended ordinary farming, and the unpainted and occasionally dilapidated wagons creaked along, drawn by horses showing plainly the effects of overwork or short rations. No pretty little flags adorned their bridles, and for minutes at a time there could have been doubt whether it were a holiday pageant or a funeral procession.

Jim on another occasion might have been critical, but at this moment the whole spectacle had somewhat of the air of chivalry, an illusion to which the young man was assisted by the appearance now and then of a really

gay rig. For instance, that of Al Romans, a self-taught farmer-lawyer, distinguished for his vehement and big-worded discussion of intricate subjects and for his skill in discomfiting and oftentimes putting to rout the "town lawyers" when they at rare intervals came out to try cases before a rural justice. Al drove a pair of smart, nimble blacks to a well-kept buggy, himself wearing on his legal head a stovepipe hat and carrying a line of flags on his whip. At sight of this Jim felt like clapping his hands.

Presently was heard the sound of fife and drum, and looking in the direction from which it came, it could be seen that the celebrated "Five Boys" were approaching with a small following from their part of the country.

Jim believed that Bertha and her party might now arrive at any time, and at his suggestion he and the professor started for the grove.



## CHAPTER IX.

### A LOVER ALARMED.

"BROTHER CHARLIE'S" week of pastoral visitation had been shortened to two days, but he came to the Good Hope neighborhood again two weeks later, and this time with what no one could doubt was a perfectly sound excuse, for it was to officiate at a marriage of members of his congregation.

Never had Cupid, he thought, done him so good a turn by shooting arrows into the hearts of others, and it was with a vague sense of some sort of advantageous nuptial incense clinging to his garments that he went over to the Old Plantation on the evening of July third. He felt that he was taking with him an atmosphere, was enveloped in some tenuous, dainty cloud of sentiment and suggestion that would exercise a subtle and powerful spell needed in his behalf.

Bertha, while she listened with much interest to the description he gave of the ceremony and the occasion, asked no questions about it herself, not knowing, since the evening they rode from the river together, just what a conversation between her and the preacher about weddings might lead to even in the presence of others or what it might put into his head to say to her in private afterwards. So the talk was mainly between "Brother Charlie" and Mr. and Mrs. Garrett, Bertha making only

casual remarks, so long as the subject was the recent wedding, to show she had not been stricken dumb.

This wedding, coming on the top of a week spent in reading and re-reading "A Midsummer Night's Dream," had an exciting influence on "Shiftless Henry." He also was at the Plantation on the evening of the third to report the final arrangements for the trip to the College Hill celebration on the morrow. The spring wagon was to be used. One of Bertha's friends and her beau, Bertha and himself and one of the Plantation's hired men would compose the party, the hired man to sit in the front seat and do the driving—this was the way Henry "calkilated" it.

Finding this little excursion afoot, the preacher, exercising a peculiar faculty of his calling, contrived to get himself invited, and remarked that now, perhaps, it would be necessary for two of them to ride in the single carriage.

"That would be the thing for you and me, wouldn't it, Bertha?" he asked.

Henry's old school teacher would have been astonished and refreshed, had he been there, at the promptness with which his dull pupil assumed to answer this question himself. The response was bold and firm.

"Not nethethary at all," he said. "Only make more hitchin' up. They ith six of uth. They ith three theath, two on a theat, an' the springth ith good an' sound."

Henry, without being aware of it, had sniffed the substanceless nuptial aroma on the preacher and had

been by it inspirited. He looked about him with firm regard, surprised at himself.

"You will not be quite so crowded, with your lunch baskets and so on, if you take the carriage," quietly remarked Mr. Garrett to them all.

"Only differenth will be with the driver," said Henry very respectfully.

"And, papa, it will be so much nicer for us all to be together," Bertha said almost pleadingly.

And there the matter was left.

Only the spring wagon was at the gate in the morning.

"'Shif'," Bertha whispered when the time for starting had about arrived, "you be sure to get in the back seat with me."

"I will," he answered, thrilled and electrified.

But in an unguarded moment he was adjusting some part of the harness when Abner Garrett assisted Bertha into the wagon, and, lo! the preacher followed her up so quickly that Bertha's warning hint, "Well, 'Shif'," was without avail.

Henry trembled with vexation as he clambered up to the only remaining place beside the hired man, pausing only for a moment of astonishment and mortification at the slip betwixt that sweet cup and his lips. He could not comprehend how it happened. In his mourning as they drove on he thought of enchantment. He had read about that in "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Henry observed before a great while that there was very little conversation directly between Bertha and "Brother Charlie," and he was well pleased at the

alacrity with which she responded to his own efforts to divert her attention to himself and show the preacher how really unimportant he was.

They probably did not pass a single house on the road without "Shif's" asking Bertha if she knew that So-and-So lived there or who did live there, and at one place, seeing some hens on the top of a corn crib, he repeated the old saw about chickens being wise enough to perch high when preachers were about. This was the worst he could do and there was enough laughter at it to gratify him exceedingly.

It was new work for "Shif," this trying to annoy a rival, and so interested did he become at it that his disappointment in not being Bertha's seatmate passed away. An hour after the start, if he had been given his choice, he would probably have elected to remain where he was.

As Professor Bland and Jim were about to leave the road and enter the beeches at one side they could see the wagon containing Bertha and her party entering at the other. And then for the first time the old man became a burden to the youth, for Jim could not follow his strong impulse to hasten his steps without deserting his crippled companion. But he hurried him along as much as possible by keeping a lead of several feet, though not without reproaching himself for causing the professor to struggle in a precipitate manner over roots and fallen branches in his effort to keep up, for the professor, poor man, prided himself on his agility and would never have been willing to admit that anyone



was going too fast for him unless actually running.

They presently saw the Plantation party halting under the branches of a mammoth beech, all yet seated in the wagon, apparently undecided whether this were the best place to make their camp. While the professor and Jim were still several yards away salutations were exchanged with nods and gestures, and "Shif" cried loudly:

"Profethor, at the duke'th oak we meet."

The professor, now almost breathless on account of the exertion Jim had put him to, was smiling and evidently about to reply when the quintuple fife and drum corps started up a deafening din, playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me." Jim felt that there was just sufficient suggestiveness in the piece to constitute some sort of joke on him and Bertha, and smiled at her. He and the professor were now quite up to the wagon, and "Shif," looking first at the professor and then at all the others, shouted so that his voice might overcome the music:

"I never heard

So muthickal a dithcord, thuch thweet thunder.

"Those fellowth mutht be Quinth, Thnug, Bottom, Flute an' Thnout. Ith that lean fellow thtanding near 'em Thtarveling?"

"Well, certainly, they are going to play for us," said the professor; and now Bertha, who had already shaken hands with Jim, greeted the professor warmly, and found an opportunity, which "Shif" had delayed, of introducing such of those present as were strangers to one another.

"Shif" had never in his life, save when he was baptized (for many years before at a revival and on his mother's earnest solicitation he had professed religion and been admitted into the fellowship of the Good Hope church)—never save this once had he heard his full name pronounced. "Henry Anthony," the preacher had said just before laying him back into the water—"Henry Anthony, I baptize thee," etc. From the solemnity of the circumstance he had come to have the impression that, however it might be with other people, it was proper for him to expect the use of his stately full name only on occasions of serious import. He was therefore peculiarly impressed when Bertha said: "Mr. Pressley, this is Mr. Henry Anthony." Bertha's voice seemed to him like that of a priestess. He felt that some sacrament was going on. His odd spirit exulted. He was now sure, anyway, that he, Mr. Henry Anthony, had carried the day over the preacher, but before he knew it Bertha walked away with Jim, and "Shif" was again puzzled and troubled. Why had she told him to be sure to get in the back seat with her, and why had she called him Mr. Henry Anthony?

The crowd was by no means a lively one. Most of the people appeared to be simply in the attitude of expectancy. The most noticeable figure was that of a man running hither and thither as if eagerly in search of somebody on whom great interests were depending. This apparition, it was soon observed, was one of the ministering spirits of the stand. He appeared to be working in two capacities—looking after things in

general at the stand, and after things in general outside of and away from that post. It was Zach Gassler. He had on the blacksmith's wife's apron, which flew about more lively on him that day than it had ever done before.

The stand was on one side of the grounds beneath the shade of a large beech. Several confectionery dignitaries were behind the rough board counters, chief of whom was the huckster in all his glory, attired in his best Sunday suit, which was protected by a large white apron that reached from chest to knees and defined in an immense smooth disk the proportions of an ample stomach. He was in his most amiable mood and was dispensing delicacies to occasional customers with much grace and animation. The blacksmith, too, was busy providing water and ice and superintending the manufacture of ice cream and lemonade.

The president of the debating society, who was master of ceremonies, moved about with an air of great importance. As a mark of distinction he wore a scarlet sash which passed diagonally over his chest. The responsibility of his position impressed him strongly, and all through the day he betrayed great nervousness lest he should commit some blunder. He made a strong effort to comport himself with such dignity and wisdom as to show that the sash had not been tied about him unworthily. In his hand he carried a pocket ledger in which he made an entry every little while, and when Jim introduced himself and told him what part on the program he was to take, he wrote his name in the little book.

Little now remained but to set the machinery of the celebration in motion. Effecting a series of beats on the snare drum, the Nabob announced that "the performances" were about to begin, and invited the people forward. Then he began at the top of his list and called out the names of those on the program. He would keep calling the name of each until there was a response or the party appeared, so that those of the group who had happened to be on the outskirts of the assembly had to advertise themselves by a loud responsive shout or suffer rapid and vociferous publicity from the mouth of the Nabob.

Jim reluctantly left Bertha's side when he found what the plan was and, hastening to the front, escaped notoriety handsomely. The orator of the day was aroused from his seat on a pile of lumber where he had quietly been chewing his tobacco. This man was called "Silver Top," from his closely cropped white hair. He was dressed in a dusty and worn suit of blue, with dusty and worn shoes to match. He was followed by "Brother Charlie." The village doctor and the maidens and a few young men were in their place around an old cabinet organ.

The celebrated "Five Boys" had disappeared, (there was at first a misunderstanding about their pay), and the choir for an opening was called on to sing. Then the people on waves of sound not wholly pleasing or thoroughly harmonious were carried away to "Beulah Land," and smelled "the sweet perfume upon the breeze." The perfume, Jim declared afterwards, must



have been old Cologne water or some kind of rose water, with which part of the young people in the choir had evidently saturated their clothing.

A "zephyr seemed to float" to Silver Top, for he arose delighted while the singing was in progress and at the conclusion of the piece took the liberty of smiling upon the choristers as he said: "Thank you, young ladies, and fellers, too."

After this interruption the Nabob jumped up, spread out his arms and announced the invocation thus:

"Now, let's all stand right straight up in the air while Mr. Warner prays"; and "Brother Charlie" prayed, the Nabob in the meanwhile looking with wide open eyes up into the tree-tops. It is supposed that he thought his reputation for skepticism, of which he was very proud, would be compromised if he showed a respectful deference to the religious sentiments of others by bowing his head or even looking to the ground.

Music by the choir was next announced, and the doctor and his band sang "Hold The Fort," which, if not patriotic in character, has a martial ring to it. Whether "Brother Charlie" had intended to descend from the platform while the choir was singing, whatever the selection, or the words of the hymn suggested some practical militancy cannot be told with certainty, but he whispered to Jim: "I must get down where I can see you and hear you better," and, quietly leaving the platform, he made his way around to where Bertha was sitting and took a place by her side, beating by several rods "Shif," who but a moment before had

waked up to the fact that, with both Jim and the preacher on the platform, there was an opportunity for him to take possession of the deserted field.

The preacher's movements somewhat disconcerted Jim, who had arranged to rejoin Bertha as soon as the speech was over, but he labored to compose himself, for his part of the program was at hand. His youth, the excellence of his production and the forcefulness of his delivery combined caused a murmur of admiration on all sides which more than once broke forth into vigorous cheering.

A hundred times in one-tenth as many minutes the young orator's eyes fell on Bertha's sweet and animated face. Nor did he fail to observe a less sympathetic but not less close attention on the part of "Brother Charlie." Prof. Bland, with the pride of a teacher and friend, followed very carefully every sentence his bright pupil uttered, and written on the honest face of Shiftless Henry was the undisguised rapture of a simple mind. Zach Gassler, too, gave expression to the liveliest enthusiasm. It was a great success for Jim.

"Pretty well for a boy," said "Brother Charlie" to Bertha as the final applause subsided and Jim, who had at first resumed his seat, was stepping to the ground.

"Pretty well?" the girl repeated. "Why, it was just splendid, and he is more of a man than any of them. I must go and congratulate him," and, bouncing up, she went to meet him, leaving the preacher to such reflections as might come.

The reputation of "Silver Top" caused much to be expected from him. It was anticipated that a profuse stream of eloquence and humor would issue forth from his mouth, but he proved to be a disappointment. Leaning on one elbow and shooting one hand toward the sky, he began: "The day we celebrate—thank Gahd for the Fourth of July," and then followed for fifteen minutes a marvelous train of ill-formed but high-sounding sentences and stale patriotic platitudes, eulogies and encomiums. It was the spreading of a moulted eagle. Weary of his task, he declared that the wind had been taken out of his sails by "the eloquent young man" who had preceded him, and that he didn't believe "much in chin music on the Fourth of July, anyway." It was dinner time, he said, and if the people felt as he did they wanted something to eat.

The Nabob, conscious that his program was being sadly disarranged by this unexpected falling off, pressed "Silver Top" to continue twenty minutes or half an hour longer, (as it yet lacked forty-five minutes of noon and it would be a frightful mismanagement of things to stop for dinner so early). But all urging was thrown away on the old colonel, who could say no more. The father of the Five Boys, who had an honorary seat on the platform, the "lean feller" to whom "Shif" had referred, was entreated to "make some remarks," but he declared he was not "in a speakin' humor," so the disappointed Nabob had no alternative but to proclaim an intermission until beat of the drum.

Of course Jim and Prof. Bland were invited to take

picnic dinner with the company from the Old Plantation. This was an event for which Bertha had made solicitous preparation, and the contents of the basket which she now unpacked represented the choicest of all the choice products that had ever come out of the Garrett kitchen.

Here was a cake with parapet and mounted cannon in the frosting; here another with an American flag in the real colors spread on the top, and a bunch of sponge-rolls in imitation of firecrackers was handed to Jim. Prof. Bland called it patriotic poetry in pastry.

"Brother Charlie," too, and Jim and indeed all of the company were each having some fine thing to say about the virtue and variety of the dainties when Gassler came over from the stand, lugging a pail of lemonade and a smaller pail of ice cream. Running his eyes over the party and addressing no one in particular, he said: "Want you to have my compliments."

Bertha thanked him very indifferently and told him that they had brought with them from home materials for both lemonade and ice cream, and plenty, too, as he could see. But Gassler put down the pails, saying: "Well, they're your'n, anyway, and you can see which makes better, you or me," and he went back to the stand.

About the time the dinner was over he returned in haste, carrying another pail of lemonade which he said he would exchange for the first, of which he said he hoped they had drunk little, because there was something wrong with it. It was not, however, with satis-



faction that he noticed, as he took it up, that not a drop had been taken from it, but his disappointment on this account was partially offset when he observed that a liberal draught had been made on the ice cream which he had brought. He would have taken no pleasure in this if he had known that it was only the preacher's doing. "Brother Charlie," in a little fit of petulance at not having received from Bertha the attention that he usually did, would not agree with her that they must all have the ice cream that she had made, and insisted himself on scooping up and passing around several dishes of that which Gassler had so urgently presented.

Gassler having again departed, Jim determined to find out what was the matter with the lemonade. It was at the dinner hour that a scandalous rumor spread abroad reflecting on the excellent reputation that the huckster and his assistants had so far through the day sustained.

Some were of the opinion that the water for the mixture had been carried over in an old, unwashed vinegar barrel that had lain perhaps for months about the huckster's store. Others were inclined to believe that the taint was from coal oil. Jim tasted carefully and gave his verdict in favor of the vinegar, though when he reported to his own party he said that he had expressed his judgment with great diffidence, inasmuch as an old mechanic who was well versed in paints, oils and varnishes had said it was undoubtedly coal oil.

Since there were on the grounds no amusements even

for young people, and an hour of promiscuous visiting was beginning to wear itself out, the beat of the drum which the Nabob had promised was hailed with a general welcome.

Jim and Bertha, having now spent two hours with the others of the Plantation party, felt at liberty to be more exclusive, and contrived it the easiest in the world to detach themselves from the rest.

"Brother Charlie" was walking aimlessly about, without, however, having been abruptly deserted by anyone, when he was joined by Gassler. They talked for some time. The preacher's face was a picture of gloom.

"I believe," said he, "that you better do what you said a few weeks ago you would do if the case seemed to be really serious."

"Have you made your proposition to her?" asked Gassler.

"I suppose you might say I had."

"Refuse ye?" was the incisive query. It cut like a knife.

"Not quite in so many words, but just the same thing. She's infatuated with this young fellow, Pressley—you can see how's she's acting today. Never treated me this way before."

"I swear I thought ye had an edge on him you'd keep all day when I saw you ridin' in this morning settin' right aside of her."

"That was nothing. Scarcely spoke a word to me all the way up."

"Well, I don't 'xactly like to tell the young feller a lie 'bout her," said Gassler scratching his head.

The preacher's lip curled.

"It would be practically the truth," he replied, "and something I might just as well have the advantage of if there is any advantage in it."

"But these things are all likely to come out some day, and if ye get her in such a way as that ye wouldn't want 'em to."

"What has made you change your mind so soon? You thought it would be a good plan. I thought so. You suggested it yourself. You promised to do it, and I want you to do it. It may work all right. If not, no harm's done."

"Harm's done either way, but I told you I'd do it and I'll keep my word—I'll do it," was the dogged response. The fulfilment came swiftly.

Jim had seen the Plantation party off for home and was starting to leave the grove himself when Gassler accosted him and said with an affectation of merriment:

"Have all the fun out of it you can. It's all right as long as you don't know, but don't let the thing go too far, 'cause you'll want to drop it when you come to know. Maybe you do know. If you do it's all right. Then you know just where you are."

"What do you mean?" asked Jim in astonishment and not without a sense of outrage that the rough Gassler had thus intruded upon so tender a matter.

"I 'lowed as p'rhaps I'd ought to tell you," said Gassler, assuming a serious air. "The girl's a peach,

but she's got darkey blood in her. If you're thinkin' much of her I'm sorry to blurt it out to you, but it's a fact. Her mother's a nigger. It don't show a great sight, but it's there."

Jim looked at Gassler a moment in great disgust, and then walked away without a word, but with poison dropped in his heart.



## CHAPTER X.

### IN PERPLEXITY.

JIM PRESSLEY's only feeling at first, as he left Gassler, was one of mingled wonder and resentment—wonder that he had become the object of the cobbler's enmity; resentment, unbounded, on account of the meanness and coarseness of an insult which was made to reach him only by including the rare and fair being whom of all the world he loved best.

Before he had reached the boarding house a thousand thoughts were in his mind, and every one tormented him. On reflection he had realized that, after all, if Gassler spoke with malice, he had dissembled it, and indeed his outward manner had been that of a friend, rather than an enemy, seeking awkwardly, abruptly and out of season, it is true, to end the delusion of one whom he esteemed.

Gassler's tone had not been one of spite or triumph. Pressley now realized that there was even a trace of regret in it, as if duty or, at any rate, a not unworthy personal interest had compelled the words, and therefore, on this sole account, he began to fear—and so be disloyal to Bertha! So soon, too, and on account of the words of one for whom Bertha had said she had an aversion!

He would not think of it, and straightway began

quite wilfully to kindle again into full flame the anger at Gassler which his late reflections had caused somewhat to subside.

Then the poison resumed its work.

Why did Bertha so dislike the man? Was it because she knew he possessed knowledge which, if he revealed it, would injure her?

Jim also thought, with a start, that the College had been founded primarily for the instruction of colored people who could take advantage of the opportunity it afforded. Had this fact any present significance?

And was there anything back of Prof. Bland's question when he had asked Jim that very morning if he had seen Bertha's parents?

Or did any unusual meaning lie in the professor's remark that Jim would find them very interesting people? No, there could not possibly have been.

And, after all, were not his own eyes good? Had he not a thousand times witnessed with the highest satisfaction and admiration her complexion undergo all manner of tests with eminent glory—the sunlight, the moonlight, the lamplight, wind, dust and the dark? Was she not a blonde? Was her skin not fairer and more delicate than that of any of ten thousand blondes? Was not her hair finer and softer? How, then, could it be possible that she had the faintest trace of the Ethiopian about her? More likely, thought Jim, that he himself had.

It was in spite of himself that Jim thought about these things, for he tried again and again to drive them

from his mind, and he cursed himself for allowing so foolish a suspicion to disturb him. After all the various assurances of a lover, which he had repeated to Bertha with ever and ever renewed emphasis, he was forced to admit that they were too strong, since so quickly and with such poor excuse he felt distrust.

As he walked along through the student's playground, which was also the president's horse pasture, on the crown of the hill, toward the boarding house the tombstones of the president's parents, on the next hill, were plainly visible. They were still looking out over the stone wall and seemed to Jim to have a calm expression of solemn and holy vindictiveness, as if they were saying to him:

"In words of folly and recklessness and vanity you profaned this spot. It was in the passion of a lover and in behalf of your love, but your punishment is upon you."

And Jim remembered what he and Bertha had said there—A photograph of those graves and headstones as a companion piece for their marriage certificate—"A pair of turtle doves on one side and a pair of tombstones, with a stone wall around them, on the other."

And he remembered his discourse about a heaven on earth, and Bertha's description of a precious little universe under a lamp shade, and his own sufficient little world under the rim of her hat. This little world seemed farther away now and that light under the lamp shade more distant. Was it to recede and be far away forever like a star?

And from the tombstones Jim's eyes turned down into the graveyard, to the clump of beech trees where in the bark Bertha's initials and his own were cut. He tried to keep himself from wishing they were not there, and went on to the boarding house.

"I think Mr. Pressley must be suffering from the reaction of his exertions today," said Mrs. Stephens, the matron, at the supper table. "See how pale and worried he looks."

He inquired how the children had enjoyed the Fourth, and when the meal was over, he proposed as a project for the relief of his own feelings and to divert careful notice from himself, a grand frolic with fire-crackers and such minor and meager contrivances for spectacular fireworks as might be found in the huckster's store.

Fearing that he might meet Gassler if he went for them himself, he sent the matron's boy. He handed out a sum of money that made the little purchasing agent feel like a man who is the trustee of millions, and instructed him to buy every variety of powder-plaything there was in the shop. The lad discharged his mission with such enthusiastic fidelity that, though Pressley suspected he would have all too little to choose from, he presently returned quite loaded down with red and yellow cylinders, big and little.

Pressley superintended the carnival of fire and noise as soon as it was grown dusk, and managed successfully to make it appear that there was not a youngster in the village that night more boyish and light-hearted



than he. The explosions and illuminations attracted what few children had not been already drawn by the fame of the Stephens boy's purchase, and Jim was again a ten-year-old and the king of the crowd.

Nor was his enjoyment of the sport wholly simulated. While it lasted he succeeded well in forgetting what had so recently troubled him, but when it was all over and he went to his room those visions of happiness on which he had so often and so fondly dwelt returned, to be bright only for the instant they were freshly caught, and then they grew pale again. So was his strife renewed to give them the color that they had but less than a half a day before.

Jim made but a poor night of it. In the black hours a great resolution came to him. Seeking an opportunity in the morning to speak with Prof. Bland alone, he asked with diffidence:

"You have known Miss Garrett's people for some time?"

"A good many years."

"She has told me they came north on account of their feeling regarding slavery."

"Yes. It was not pleasant for those in the south whose consciences led them to oppose slavery."

"I suppose that is the only reason that brought them north?" the young man suggested, with a mingled sense of timidity and dread.

"That is the only reason they ever gave."

"It doesn't seem possible that there could be any race mixture in Miss Garrett from either side of the house."

Prof. Bland was not so much surprised at this suggestion as Jim had hoped he would be.

"In Miss Bertha?" the professor said, seeming to be thinking faster than he was speaking. "Ridiculous! Her parents are as white as I am."

"Well I had only heard some insinuations," said Jim, whose brother Fred arrived at this moment from Madison in a buggy to take him home.

Since early in the spring Fred had been working on a peach farm, belonging to a friend of his father's, located in Kentucky twelve miles from Madison. His work was not hard and he found his situation most agreeable, affording him, as it did, an opportunity to observe ways and manners far different from those with which he had been familiar in a western and a prairie state. All the hands, Fred told Jim, as they rode along, were pleasant to work with and some of them were exceedingly interesting for personal peculiarities.

"Any darkies working over there?" asked Jim.

"Country's full of 'em. Only one or two about our place now. There will be lots of them when they get to shipping, I presume. Say, Jim, it will be picking time pretty soon and you can have a job over there for three or four weeks if you want it. And I believe you would like it. You will see things over there that we never saw in Iowa. You can get to know something about Ol' Kaintuck. All the peaches you can eat, pretty good board, pretty decent place to sleep, and not very hard work."

"I believe I would like it," said Jim. "Those darkies over there"—

"Oh, they eat by themselves and have their own sleeping quarters, of course."

"I don't mean that. Are there any white darkies among them?"

"Once in a while you see one who is so white that you would not know from his appearance that there was a drop of negro blood in him—straight hair, thin lips, everything."

"How, then, do people who are strangers to them know them to be negroes?"

"Where their antecedents are unknown many of them are no doubt taken all their lives for white men."

"I suppose, then, they sometimes marry whites, and no one ever knows the difference," said Jim.

"Yes, but the thing might come out in the children. You know, they say a child sometimes bears no resemblance to either of its parents, but takes after some one farther back the family line. Now, suppose you married a girl with negro blood in her—so little that no one could see it—and a child came along that took after its dusky grandfather—how would you feel?" Jim's face flushed.

"Anyone would feel queer I should think," he replied.

"And in another case the child might take after the white grandfather and be all right. That reminds me of what one of the men over there was telling us. He was sure that negro parents were always pleased if their children were not so dark as themselves, and that,

the whiter the children were, the better they liked it. To prove this he described a Sunday school Christmas entertainment at a colored Baptist church up in Cincinnati or Covington. They had a scene representing the Nativity. They had a stable with a big, tin star glittering above it, and a floor covered with straw. They had a colored woman for the Virgin Mary, but the part of the infant Jesus was taken by a snow-white flaxen-haired doll which had been bought at a store. And he said every darkey there thought it was just fine."

"Their color has been a badge of servitude and disgrace so long that it is not surprising they should like to get rid of some of it," said Jim.

"I don't know whether that is it exactly," responded his brother. "A man might marry an Indian or a Chinese or a woman of any other race under the sun, and no one think that he had unpardonably disgraced himself, but as to the Ethiopian it is different. There is something repugnant in this race not present in the others. Slavery does not account for it all. It is a natural antipathy."

"If you fell in love with a girl who was fairer and prettier than any other girl you ever saw, and you became engaged to her, and then found out that she had a negro taint, what would you do?" asked Jim.

"I would break the engagement, not only for the fact itself, but because she would have been in honor bound to reveal it to me. If she had not known it herself, which is most unlikely, and there had been no



concealment, and I were dead in love with her, I suppose my heart and my head would have to fight it out. But if there is negro blood in a person it is sure to appear somehow, or some one is sure to know, and, if sure to know, sure to tell. Such a thing as that could never be more of a secret than an open secret."

"That's exactly what I think," said Jim with an alacrity and emphasis that made Fred turn and look at him. Jim was alarmed lest the manner of his utterance had betrayed his concern, and quickly reverted to his brother's suggestion that he take an outing at the peach farm.

Fred returned to the peach farm the next morning.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A BETTER DAY.

CONSIDER and reconsider it as he might, Pressley could not get rid of the doubt which Gassler's remark and manner had put in his mind. And what hurt him most was a sense of unfaithfulness to Bertha in that he had found it impossible not to give some credence to the first thing said against her, and that, too, by the man whom she disliked most. Pretty lover thus to be so quick to believe what he should have been the last to believe! After all his tendernesses, his promises, his assurances, his protestations to her he was so ready to desert her!

Such were the self-censuring thoughts he had. But he loved her, and if he could not keep himself assured more than a minute at a time that Gassler had spoken falsely—assured by recalling the closing part of his conversation with Fred, assured by the positive answer of Prof. Bland, assured by his own knowledge of Bertha's open and honest character—if he could not thus keep himself certain, he would resolve, anyhow, to stand by her, negro taint or anything else, and then he would break the resolution.

Sometimes Pressley thought he could find out the facts by making discreet and apparently indifferent inquiries of those who must know all about the Garrett

family. He had ventured this with Prof. Bland, but not with decisive result, and to deliberately go about it further would be to countenance fully the suspicion that he hated.

Sometimes he thought he would at once sit down and write Bertha all about it, and add, of course, that he knew it was not so, but would not Gassler's remark, or the substance of it, be a pretty thing to repeat to her! His manhood revolted at the mere idea.

Sometimes he determined that he would go down and see Bertha at her home, where he would have an opportunity to satisfy himself as to her mother with his own eyes, but would he like it that the very first time he went to her home he should go as a spy?

The truth is that young Pressley's sense of a lover's honor forbade him to do anything which would be an admission that he had any suspicion that Bertha had deceived him or that he had been deceived in her. But he was like a man who stops his ears to keep from hearing his own words.

He decided that he would overcome his doubts and fears by will power alone, and his thoughts kept coming and going in a circle. A hundred times a day he would review all the evidence and acquit Bertha. Then he would review and be undecided; then review again and acquit.

He was exasperated with himself because he could not consider Prof. Bland's answer as a competent and positive settlement of the question that had been forced into his mind, but as he revolved it and revolved

it he found himself always returned to the conviction that the professor had left something unsaid, and he conceived that the professor, honest as to everything else, might, through friendship for the Garrett family, practice some deception thought to be to its advantage.

Before the end of the first week at home he got a letter from Bertha, saying she would be up to Madison to do some shopping the next day, and asking him to meet her at a certain drug store, which he did.

Now he had intended to tell her his trouble, but from the moment he saw her it was impossible for him to speak of it or scarcely to think of it. It is true that he searched her face for any sign of coquetry or cunning that the absence of any suspicion heretofore might have caused him to overlook, but her countenance was as guileless as an angel's.

He scrutinized her complexion for any telltale shadow, but it was as clear and soft as the face of a lily.

He scanned her head for even one eccentric hair, but all was fineness and undulation.

And here she was, as gentle, as vivacious, and in every way as lovely as ever—radiant to see him. Shame on him, he thought, that in his mind he had allowed a doubt to dim the beauty of this vision!

And so in her blessed presence he was happy again and as the weight that had depressed his spirits was removed they arose by reaction to an unwonted buoyancy, the like of which even Bertha had never before observed.

"Jim, I don't think you studied real, real hard



during the last two months of school," she said playfully, "but already, I think, your vacation has done you good."

"This is the best day and the best moment of it," he replied, and was instantly rewarded for this gallant telling of the truth by seeing something in Bertha's eyes that came there for him alone.

In Bertha's company was a neighbor's little girl, to whom a partnership in the day, with its long ride and the rare sights of the town, had been offered as a treat. It was being enjoyed with an excitement that the timid little creature did her best every moment to repress lest she should break the bounds of decorum, a matter concerning which her mother had strictly charged her.

Had this little girl not been along Jim might have proposed to go with Bertha on her shopping round, but he felt that three in the party would be a crowd. It was arranged, however, that they should meet at a restaurant and take lunch together, and that in the afternoon, when Bertha was ready to start for home, Jim should act as coachman while she called at the stores for her bundles.

At the restaurant Bertha and Jim had an opportunity to agree, in dear and cautious undertones, that he should take a horseback ride down to her home the following Monday. The little girl, of course, had nothing to do with the negotiation of this fond contract, but Jim was in an overflowing mood, and, since she was close at hand, his thank-offering went to her—

a bag of candy bought on the spot, and of a size such as the child had never dreamed about.

When, later, the bundles had all been collected, Jim remained in the buggy until the very last house that could make any pretense to be hanging to the skirts of the city had been passed. Had Bertha driven up alone that day, it is ten to one that now the horse would have been forced to make so many circumvolutions before getting away from the vicinity of the town and turned into the direct way homeward that, had he any knowledge of frail human nature, he would have suspected his mistress had given over the reins to some tipsy stranger.

Adieux were said perforce, at a length curtailed and with a tenderness restrained. But as Pressley walked toward town he had never looked forward with so lively a pleasure to a next meeting with Bertha.

"If there were any truth in that," he mused, reassuring assurance, "would she have been so free about inviting me to her home? She is as frank as the open sky. She is as free from deception as a flower."

## CHAPTER XII.

### LED BY BENIGNANT GIANTS.

No knight ever rode forth better satisfied with the horse under him, the journey before him or the prospect at the journey's end than Jim Pressley the following Monday morning when he started out to fulfill the appointment made with Bertha.

No aborigine, no hunter, no emigrant, no pioneer had ever looked on the Ohio river with more delight or followed it for a foot of its course—for his road lay along the stream—more thankfully. He had received minute directions as to the way, and understood them perfectly well, but he preferred to feel that he was totally ignorant concerning the matter and that the beautiful river, about which he had often heard Bertha speak and which he knew she loved, was his guide as he now went to her.

He chose to fancy that the stream was her old and confidential companion whose sole purpose in flowing was to please her and which was gladly doing her bidding today in escorting him to her. Blessed river to be loved by her and to have been established since the continent was built only to wind by her home! Pressley saw a dainty nymph on every little wave, smilingly directing him onward.

As for the huge and rugged bluffs that silently tow-

ered above him on his right hand, Pressley thought he had never seen objects so large that were at the same time so gentle. They had to his eyes the air of kindly giants, the Titanic body guard of the river, and all of them the out-watch, loyal to his lady, of those enchanted precincts whither he was proceeding.

So he rode along, proud of this august companionship and honored above any prince by this rare and noble array sent forth to bid him welcome.

When Bertha arose that morning she found, as usual on Monday mornings, Old Maggie and Mrs. Garrett in the summer kitchen quite surrounded with suds, starch and bluing water and the weekly recurring material to which these things are applied. A household activity was in progress in which Bertha had scarcely ever failed in late years to take a part, having a pride in the appearance of certain ornamental portions of apparel, which could be gratified only through the deftness of her own manipulation in doing them up. But on this occasion it was soon apparent that her sole interest in the task was that it should be accomplished and out of the way with the least possible delay.

"Because, mamma," she said, "when I was in Madison Saturday I saw Jim Pressley, and he said he was going out for a long horseback ride today and might be down this way and make a call. I wouldn't want to introduce him to you over a wash tub. And he may be here for dinner, too."

"Why, Bertha!" exclaimed Mrs. Garrett, "and you waitin' till now to tell us about it"?



"And what things is gettin' into yo' head?" she added with an air of grave suspicion. "Why should Jim Pressley or Jim Anybody come down all this way to see you? I reckon he's not coming without an invitation? And so soon after school's out? And you nothin' but a young girl?"

"Well, mamma, he's only one of the boys up there and a nice fellow, and if he told me he was going horse-back riding, what could I do but ask him to come down and see me? Anyway, he's coming, mamma, and we must not have things looking too bad."

"Bertha!" Mrs. Garrett turned her head slightly to one side and looked at the girl from over her spectacles, speaking as a parent sometimes does to a little child when it is thought that a show of protest must be made.

Bertha understood this deportment well, but, fearing she had already made a blunder in her diplomacy, she would trust herself to make no fuller explanation or argument and simply kept smiling, not without a certain embarrassment that is delightful to behold, whenever occasion creates it, in maidens of her age.

"Since you are so wonderfully pleased," said Mrs. Garrett, "the rest of us ought not to cry over it." And Bertha then knew that, blunder or no blunder, there would be perfect agreement in the household that the visitor should be most decently received.

"Well, we'll not be all day about this," said Mrs. Garrett, looking over to where Old Maggie was working a wringer. And then Bertha, by a feminine instinct impelled, went to see just what was the amplitude of

delicate bounty in the larder, which is probably always to the true housekeeper, actual or prospective, an armory containing a sort of ammunition which, though non-metallic, has been known a hundred thousand times to be mightily effective.

"Mamma, you'll make a cake and a blackberry pie, won't you?" asked Bertha as she returned, "and I'll tidy up the rooms a bit."

"Me make a cake and pie?" was the answer. "Isn't it yo' cakes and pies that ought to be on the table today?—And have you told yo' father about it?"

"About what?" asked the girl, startled by the suspicion that the shrewd woman had conjectured the whole situation and regarded it as admitted.

"About what? About yo' company."

Even this explanation seemed somewhat equivocal to Bertha, but she realized that people with secrets can be over-anxious about what knowledge their friends possess, and she refrained from showing further doubt by asking further questions. She only said: "No, but I'll tell him."

From the number of times Bertha appeared on the small front porch thereafter and cracked her cloth in the air one would have supposed that she was dusting out a grist mill, but it would have been readily observed that every time she came out she took a careful look down the hill toward the river, and then it would have been understood that some eager expectation was distracting her.

Abner Garrett, after being in the fields awhile,

watching the men get well started at the day's work, returned and for some time walked slowly to and fro in the shade of the long west porch. At length he intercepted Bertha as she was returning from one of her look-outs and said:

"Dusting, dusting all this while? Why, everything is neat enough. Come, sit out in front and tell me all about your year at school."

"Very well, papa," she replied. "And do you know the best part of the school is coming down here today?"

"Do I know? This is the first I have heard of it. A company of your friends coming down?"

"No, not a company. Only one person."

Now, President Boyce had thought it his duty on one or two occasions to tell Mr. Garrett about the attentions Bertha was receiving from young Pressley, and he expressed it as his opinion that the two young people might be making, or fancying they were, plans of a far-reaching scope.

This information and the freedom with which Bertha had just spoken made Mr. Garrett at once think of Pressley, but, if his guess were right, he was determined to embarrass Bertha with a presumption, so he asked:

"And who may she be?"

"Oh, it's not a girl. It's Jim Pressley."

Mr. Garrett seated himself on a rustic bench and drew Bertha down beside him with his arm around her.

"And why," he asked, "do you call Jim Pressley the best part of the school?"

The old man's hand trembled as it lay lightly on the girl's shoulder, but she was herself fluttering with excitement and did not notice it.

"Oh, I like Jim better than any of the other students up there," she answered. And, in spite of the resolution that she and Jim had agreed on, she was beginning to feel the bubbling up of that abundance of the heart out of which the mouth speaketh, and the more easily did she fail to keep guard on her lips in this matter of supreme interest to herself, because her mind had always been open to Mr. Garrett. She forthwith added:

"I like him better than any other young man I ever met."

"Do you think you like him better than any young man you might ever meet?"

"Yes."

"Then you are in love with him, darling?"

"Yes—and isn't it all right, papa?" cried Bertha, furnishing, as she spoke, some such anomaly as would be presented by the spectacle of an angel in a confessional.

"We must trust so. But how far my little girl has ventured all by herself! Was she not afraid? And so soon?"

"Afraid? Why, no, papa. I could not be, because I knew him and could not help liking him and trusting him. Everybody likes him. Besides, we have so long to wait that our love will be tested by time."

"Is there, then, some doubt or reservation?"

"Not on the part of ourselves, but it seems to me



that the certainty of a long engagement ought to excuse us in the eyes of those who may learn or suspect what our relation is and who may be disposed to think we were too young to enter into it."

"Perhaps the world has some such notion as that, but really, Bertha, at Cupid's court no candidates for matrimony are ever received on probation, yet I have no doubt you carefully considered what you were doing. Have you spoken to your mother?"

"No, but when I told her Jim was coming today I fear she suspected the truth."

"Leave it to me to tell her, then. Do any of your friends or Pressley's know it?"

"No. We resolved we would tell no one for two or three years, but I couldn't keep it a secret from you."

"Two or three years will be soon enough for other people to know."

Mr. Garrett continued after a short pause: "I have heard Mr. Boyce speak about Pressley, and he praises him very highly. I understand, too, that his father is a most respectable man, and the whole family one of good standing. I hope the young man will like your family."

He said the last words with so much evident concern and apprehension that the girl felt touched at what she regarded as her own father's deprecation of himself in the contemplation of her lover, and, with her arms around his neck, she was swift to assure him that she had told Jim all about her people and that he had said

to her he was sure he would like them all, as indeed he would have to do to be her lover at all.

"But suppose he did not after he became acquainted with us?" asked Mr. Garrett.

"Oh, but papa, he will," Bertha replied in a manner almost impatiently positive, never doubting the plenitude of her authority to speak for Jim and make promises for him in such a matter as this.

"And papa," she continued as if indeed she had fully settled the question, "I have another secret to tell you."

"What is that?"

"You remember 'Brother Charlie' rode in the carriage with me the evening we went down to the river to see Walter and Ida off. Well, coming home, he said he wished that I would be his wife."

"What! So many all at once trying to steal my daughter away from me!" said Mr. Garrett, seriously enough at heart, but with an outward levity that at least half disguised his feeling.

"And you like Mr. Pressley better than 'Brother Charlie'?" he asked, affecting the air of some gossiping girl of Bertha's own age.

"Of course I do," Bertha answered, and, though of course she did, she spoke timidly and with not a little confusion, for this talking about her love with any other than the one other in whose heart half the precious treasure lay was strange to her and the comparison suggested gave her a not well-defined but uneasy feeling that a thief was about.

"Sometimes one's opinion of another is affected by an acquaintance with that other's family and relatives," said Mr. Garrett. "'Brother Charlie'"—

Just then was heard a dismaying confusion of noises and exclamations at the summer kitchen, and in an instant Mrs. Garrett and Old Maggie came running around the corner of the house, looking backward with faces full of fear.

"Shep's gone mad!" cried Mrs. Garrett.

Taking up a pitchfork, with which early that morning he had been loosening the soil in some flower beds, Mr. Garrett led the way cautiously to the rear, followed at a little distance by the three women who were measurably reassured by the formidable character of the weapon which had been so convenient to Mr. Garrett's hand, though the kinetoscope of the imagination was revealing to their minds the most horrible sort of hydrophobic pictures.

Old Maggie, trembling violently, took hold of Bertha's arm, and walked rather in front of her than by her side, as if to protect her.

The beloved dog of the household was rolling over and over on the familiar ground, and making the domestic premises a scene of awful dread by his foaming at the mouth, his fiery staring, his snarling at nothing, his snapping at the air. Garrett and Bertha spoke to him in turn, timidly and pleadingly. And then all spoke to him together, but his insanity was not in the least beguiled or intermitted and he seemed all at once to have completely put off his docility and gentleness

for the ferocity of the fiercest brute in the animal kingdom save that he showed no inclination to make a direct attack.

Still keeping carefully on guard with the fork, Garrett got a basin of water and put it on the ground close to Shep's nose. The dog turned away from it apparently in greater delirium than before.

"Sho' he's mad," exclaimed Mrs. Garrett, "he won't take watah."

"Oh, it's probably just a hot weather fit—lots of dogs have them," said Mr. Garrett quietly, but with a tremor in his voice that a louder tone might have slurred over and made unnoticeable. He coaxed and pleaded with the dog to return to his senses, but in vain.

"Oh, he's mad sho," repeated Mrs. Garrett. "He'll have to be killed." And then, turning to Bertha, she exclaimed with a gravity quite overwhelming in the excitement of the moment: "Oh, I wish Mr. Pressley wa'n't comin' today."

Bertha took the words to mean that a calamity was fallen on the house which had utterly demoralized it and put it in mourning. Already she had struggled hard to control herself, and now, alarmed as she was by the supposed danger of horrible injury to herself or the others, suffering out of sympathy for her pet in his agony, and keenly stricken by the suggestion of his fate, this intimation that the day had been spoiled for the reception of her lover proved too much for her and she burst into tears.

Mr. Garrett alone had understood the full meaning



of his wife's remark. He turned around and said, shaking his head and with his eyes closely upon her: "This will make no difference."

Nevertheless he was unnerved by what she had said. He dropped the fork, and almost as much overcome as Bertha, went to her side. She was sobbing like a child, supported by Old Maggie who had thrown her arms around her and was cooing to her the old, soft and inarticulate expressions which she had often found potent to soothe the sorrows of the girl's earliest years. It had been long since the poor old servant held Bertha so, and if an observer had been present, not under the excitement by which the others were distracted, he would have noted it as singular that, among the many emotions written on the woman's face, an expression of satisfaction was predominant, and mingled with it, if not superseding it, was as singular an air of submissiveness when Garrett laid his hand tenderly on Bertha's shoulder.

He had scarcely done this, however, when he saw a young man on horseback drawing up at the front gate. The rider had noticed as he rode up that the family was excited by some unusual incident and he had also observed that Bertha was in trouble, and so it was with a solemn concern that, after dismounting, he stood at his horse's head and waited while she crossed the long lawn.

Try as hard as she might, Bertha could not wholly quiet the agitation that had so recently overcome her, nor were the tears quite banished from her eyes.

Pressley had determined to be very discreet in saluting her, but what control has gallantry ever had over itself in the presence of beauty in distress? He straightway was filled with compassion for her, and, heedless of a scrutiny that was parental and therefore the most trying a lover ever has to undergo, he put his arms around her and kissed her with reckless and passionate tenderness.

Simultaneously Shep took to rolling again, and cast himself through an open window into the cellar.

Garrett advanced with the intention of bidding Pressley welcome and then taking his horse to the barn, but he had gone only a few steps when he saw that Bertha and Jim were already on the way to the barn with the horse, so he turned back and followed his wife and Old Maggie into the house at a rear door. He descended to the cellar to make sure that the door was securely closed. He found it shut. He opened it and cautiously peeped in to see if any change had come over Shep. The dog was quiet but made no sign when called. Mr. Garrett carefully reclosed the door and came up stairs.

Bertha had scarcely completed her description of the excitement and terror of the morning when young Pressley felt more than ever like a knight, and one, too, who had arrived just in time to save his lady from an awful fate. He was become a St. George with the satisfaction and the pride of a hero who had slain a dragon; and as he walked along he thrust his riding whip out before him as if it had been a spear, and

patted his horse on the neck as the charger that had borne him in the perilous encounter. It was a horse hired from a livery stable, but Jim resolved that when he returned home he would buy it so that he might always own and honor it.

But Jim's fancy took even a more extravagant flight when, after his horse had been stalled, Bertha showed him her riding pony. Most blessed of brutes ever created! Here indeed was a thoroughly tamed and domesticated Pegasus, finding Mr. Garrett's barn a finer home than the clouds, and the highways of Hoosier dirt freer than the infinite avenues of the sky, and content to be even shorn of his wings so long as Bertha was his mistress.

Jim did not say quite all this, but he felt it all and much more to the like effect though perhaps not so expressible.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### WHOSE GUEST?

BARNS have a romance for childhood, but are so barren of any suggestion of bowers or balconies that they have never been put forward in poetry or prose as places convenient or appropriate for the meetings of lovers.

Yet Bertha may be pardoned if she detained Jim where they were until those at the house had had time to change the stage, arrange their costumes and compose their minds for a more tranquil scene than that which had just been enacted—a transformation which she well knew was in active progress.

Jim was soon seeing a beauty in bridles that he had never dreamed of before, and side-saddles appeared to him the most ingenious and elegant of all things upholstered. He could have rubbed the nose and patted the neck of the riding pony all the rest of the day as a choice privilege.

But Bertha found a balcony.

“Come up to the haymow,” said she. “I will go in and sit down where I have sat a thousand times, and you must enter, just as I often wished, when I was little, a knight might do, and fall in love with me, a peasant girl, there, and at once arrange with my parents to take me off to his splendid castle.”



And so the two played this fascinating game. It would have made silly sport if any others had joined. They say the wisest men have intimate friends before whom they are not afraid to play the fool as much as they like. If lovers are not always wise they never fail to arrogate wisdom unto themselves, and they play the fool, one to another, blessed beings, at the same time.

But the game, as has been intimated, was an artfully supplied performance on Bertha's part, and, guessing well the time it would take for the household to rehabilitate itself, she at length conducted Jim to the portals of the family mansion.

They walked slowly along the broad and well-beaten path across the big lot. Jim was continually looking near and far around in survey of the prospect presented, and was delighted to convey to Bertha the pleasing impression of rural comfort and luxury that the sight suggested.

As they approached the house Bertha observed with the highest satisfaction that perfect order was on guard beneath the roof and felt assured that the traditional family hospitality was prepared for a most decorous and gracious act of dispensation.

"This is where we were sitting when the robbers came," said Bertha as they reached the steps of the west porch.

Mr. Garrett was just coming out, and heard the words as he passed through the doorway.

"And here comes a robber worse than they," thought he with grave humor and resignation.

But there was no sign in his face of such a sentiment when, the next instant, he extended his greetings to the young man. He did not wait for the ceremony of introduction.

"You have already been introduced, Mr. Pressley, and who could Bertha's father be but myself?" said he, giving his hand. "It gives me great pleasure to bid welcome to one of Bertha's friends."

"And anyone would feel complimented at being cordially received for her sake," said Jim.

"I hope you enjoyed your ride," said Mr. Garrett.

"Very much. These thick woods on every side, and the rocks, are quite new to me, and to come to such a place as this is like getting into another part of the United States."

"But Shep, papa?" said Bertha.

"Yes, the dog?" seconded Jim.

"Rolled into the cellar," said Mr. Garrett, "and I think he is quiet. He was when I peeped in to see only a few minutes ago."

Jim demanded to be conducted to the cellar forthwith, saying he had always been quite a hand with dogs and that perhaps he could coax and pet the animal back into his wonted temper. So all three went to a door that afforded an entrance into the cellar from the outside, and as Jim unhesitatingly descended the stairs, pushed the door open and stepped partly in, Bertha was fearful of the consequences of his rashness almost to the point of pulling him back, though she admired the act as the bravest she had ever witnessed

and just such a one as Jim might be expected to perform.

The dog had evidently heard the footsteps on the outside, for he seemed to have awaited the opening of the door with eager expectancy. In an instant he was at Jim's feet, and with the abundant and affecting testimony of joyful barks and whines and fawnings upon even a stranger he signified his release from the demons that had tormented him. Catching sight of Mr. Garrett and Bertha at the top of the steps, he was up the flight at a bound to show by every sign his delight at finding himself free from bewilderment and again in normal relations with his human familiars.

Contrary to all calculations, Jim was received among the wash tubs, for most of the utensils and still a large part of the raw material of the laundry were outside the house in the shade of the kitchen wing where the restoration of Shep had just been so satisfactorily demonstrated.

Old Maggie had resumed her work and was an intensely interested spectator of what was happening, though silent and standing apart near the door.

Presently, to Bertha's great surprise, Garrett, when the party had come near to the house in play with the dog, introduced Pressley to Mrs. Crowell, the seldom spoken name Old Maggie bore. Mr. Garrett had never introduced strangers to Old Maggie before, nor had any other member of the family, and Bertha scarcely knew what to make of the novelty. She was uncertain whether it was due to excitement in Mr. Garrett or

was a testimony thus soon in honor of her lover, the blessing of whose acquaintance, certainly, should not be denied to the most lowly person connected with the family.

Bertha had just suggested that all go to the front porch when Mrs. Garrett appeared.

"Mamma, this is Mr. Pressley," said Bertha, "and see," she added while Mrs. Garrett and Jim exchanged salutations, "the first thing we did was to bring him to the back yard and we've kept him here all this while."

"We set the dog on him even," said Garrett. "But no, we did not bring him into the back yard. The truth is we had all abdicated and it was Shep that was to do the honors of the family. Therefore it was necessary to knock at Shep's door."

Then to the front porch they went, and sat down there in easy chairs. Shaded from the sun of a warm July day, now well advanced, and after a morning so filled with unwonted activity and excitement, it was a delightfully refreshing spot. Outward for eighty feet stretched the yard, carpeted and lightly bowered with the deepest verdure of grass and leaf, while the profuse bloom of a variety of flowers furnished the livelier tints in a most pleasing spectacle of color. Farther on, beyond the fence and the road, were the forest trees, gradually sinking at first into a dell. To the right, over an expanse of tree-tops and the gleaming river, was a view of the Kentucky hills.

The scene, near and far, always furnished theme of remark to strangers, and Garrett, to whom year after



year it remained originally fresh, never ceased to be fond of discussing its beauties with anyone who was in the raptures of a first vision.

Into this subject, the view, the wooded and hilly landscapes as compared with those he had been used to in his native prairie state; the original selection of the site; the flowers and the shrubs, many of which had been imported from the south and were therefore new to him, Jim entered with all the ardor it was calculated to arouse in a lover of the graceful in nature.

He addressed himself rather oftener to Mrs. Garrett than to either her husband or Bertha, but the latter soon observed what she took to be an embarrassment in the manner of her lover whose habit it had always been to conduct himself with the most engaging ease in the presence of company, whether familiar or strange.

At first the girl felt a trifle flattered by his pre-occupation, as a queen might feel herself complimented by the mild confusion of a lord admitted to her court. That Jim should be especially concerned about the quality of his behavior on this occasion she justly regarded as bestowing a peculiar distinction on his hosts and as showing a most satisfactory solicitude as to the opinion they might form respecting him.

Bertha supposed it was most natural that a mamma and a lover should be to each other persons of great interest, especially at the first meeting, but it seemed to her that in this case they were seeking to hasten knowledge in a rare manner by an unusual intensity of observation.

As the young man conversed with the woman his look was direct and searching, as if he were anxious that not the faintest of her outward features should escape his scrutiny, nor did he appear to be less attentive to the manner in which she expressed herself.

Bertha believed that it was when the conversation was particularly between Jim and Mrs. Garrett that his peculiar behavior was most marked, and several times felt an impulse to withdraw him from the company of the older people. But now Mrs. Garrett excused herself by saying that she must go to see how Old Maggie was coming on, by which she really meant that she must superintend the preparations for dinner, and Bertha, thinking that Jim might fare better with Mr. Garrett alone, the two being left as "men folks" exclusively, soon found a pretext for leaving also.

In a few minutes Garrett and Jim were engaged in a quiet conversation about the school at College Hill, an interview that proved to be surpassingly interesting to the young man.

"No colored students there now, I believe?" said Mr. Garrett.

"Not any," said Jim. "Were there ever many there?"

"Never many at the same time but, altogether, a considerable number, and what it was to their characters and lives no man can estimate. Mr. Boyce has done a great work there. Standing on the border between Slavery and Freedom, the school was a beacon light during the anti-slavery struggle. For several

years Mr. Boyce's work was bold. He passed through the fire. Often threatened himself with assassination and the buildings with incendiarism, he was just as brave as a soldier on the battlefield.

"Take Rev. Moses Broyles of Indianapolis," continued Mr. Garrett. "He is a monument to the Eleutherian College, as we used to call the institution, which was in fact its official name. Broyles was a slave near Paducah, Kentucky. He paid his master \$400 for his freedom. He found his way to College Hill. He had learned he would be taught there. Had never been to school. Had the ambition of any white man in him. He was there two or three years. Supported himself by his own labor. Had a bright mind and studied with avidity, as a famishing man might eat. He became a Baptist minister and for twenty-five years has been the pastor of a colored Baptist church in Indianapolis which he has made grow to a membership of several hundred. Consider him and his influence alone. Worth all the school cost to develop this one man—worth all the sacrifice made and all the danger incurred. A singular thing is that, while the slaveholders cursed the school as an instrument of the warfare against their 'peculiar institution,' some of them sent their children to it to be educated."

"Why, how's that?" asked Jim in surprise.

"Because some of them had children that were not the children of white mothers," replied Mr. Garrett.

"Oh, I see," said Jim.

"Though for all that you sometimes could not tell but that the children were pure white."

Jim gave a little start. "And their mothers full-blooded blacks?" he asked.

"Sometimes, but the most of these 'white' children were from mixed mothers, in whom the grossness of the African features was softened, frequently in a beautiful blend, by Caucasian traits. At the school were Juliet Wilson, from Jackson, Miss., and Eliza Risher, both so white that they could pass for white. Both married white men."

"Did the men know they were not whites?" asked Jim, who was listening to Mr. Garrett with a concentration a juror might exhibit when an important witness was testifying.

"Certainly they knew it but thought it would make no difference. Yes, Juliet was her father's daughter and slave property at the same time, like many another. Then, there were Lucy and Georgiana Jefferson, grand-daughters, and their father, a son, of Thomas Jefferson."

"What!" exclaimed Jim. "Of President Thomas Jefferson?"

"Of President Thomas Jefferson. Oh, some of them were of illustrious parentage. The son's name was Thomas also. He was a carpenter. He paid \$4,200 for the freedom of himself and family. They went to College Hill. He was fifty years old but he entered the school with his daughters. He was almost white and yet plainly showed his negro blood, but not a sign of it



in the girls. They could pass for white. Did pass for white when they accompanied Mrs. Boyce on a visit to her kindred in Ohio in '53. Lucy was smart, learned fast, and taught school as a white girl where her origin was not known. Another pupil who had a celebrated father was Theodore Johnson, son of Vice-President Richard M. Johnson. He served in the Union army as a white man, was a brave soldier and died in a hospital."

"Well, now, the children of those girls who were so nearly white and who married white men—what were the children like?" asked Jim, taking care to exhibit only a class-room interest in the matter. "Or do you happen to know?"

"As to these particular cases I do not know, but I have known a great many such instances. Sometimes the children are as white as any, and sometimes the negro features show very plainly."

"I should think that would be hard on the fathers," said Jim.

"No doubt they always hope that the offspring will be white, but they ought to abide by the result. They know the chances."

Then Mr. Garrett went on: "The usefulness of the school was much impaired by the passage of what was called the 'black law,' prohibiting colored people from coming into the state, and making it unlawful for any person to aid or harbor such. Under this law Mr. Boyce and the steward of the boarding house were arrested, because colored pupils from other states were

received at the school after its passage. They were bound over and gave bail, but a defect was found in the indictment and the case never came to trial."

In reply to Jim's successive questions Mr. Garrett then gave a full exposition of the slaveholders' side of the slavery question and of their feeling toward the agitation for the abolition of slavery—a chapter in American history that Jim had never had an opportunity to learn so well.

"Did you ever see a black's pass?" asked Mr. Garrett.

Jim never had.

"Here is Juliet Wilson's. Mr. Boyce was showing it to me not long ago, and I asked him for it as a curiosity. This is what Juliet came north on." And he handed Jim a document bearing the following writing:

State of Mississippi }  
Hinds County } City of Jackson

To All Who May See These Presents:

Know ye that we, John I. Guiow and Joshua Green, executors of the last will and testament of Dr. Miller Wilson deceased, and the testamentary guardians of his daughter, Juliet S. Wilson, the bearer hereof, hereby give her leave to travel to Madison, Indiana, and to school near there. We hope she will be permitted to pass without interruption and be cared for and properly protected by all persons who may desire to know where she is travelling.

Given under our hands and seals this 31, May, 1854.

John I. Guiow [Seal]  
Joshua Green [Seal]

State of Mississippi }  
Hinds County }

Before me, Richard Fletcher, mayor of the city of Jackson and ex-officio justice of the peace and notary public, in and for said county, personally appeared John I. Guiow and Joshua Green, who severally acknowledged that they signed and executed the foregoing instrument of writing on the day of the date thereof for the purpose therein expressed.

Witness my hand and seal of office this 31st day of May, 1854.

[Seal] Richard Fletcher, Mayor,  
Ex-officio Justice of the  
Peace and Notary Public.

Jim was examining this grim and solemn evidence of the days of human chattelage, almost as strange to him as if it had been some palimpsest found in an ancient tomb, when Mrs. Garrett returned.

"Juliet's pass, is it?" said she. "I was so glad Mistah Garrett got it. Something to remind us of her. She used to come down heah. Our Julia was a little a-feared at first to have her come down, for what folks might say about Juliet's bein' colo'd, but oh, she was just the nicest, sweetest girl that evah was, and people that saw any sign of colo'd blood in her had to be told, and then they couldn't see it—she was so white."

"That should have been white enough to satisfy anybody," said Jim.

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Garrett, "and 'pears like it satisfied the man that married her."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### ENCHANTMENT.

AND now at length Pressley began exhibiting the prime qualities of a guest. His preoccupation left him and he showed a receptivity whose capacity was finely measured to the various offerings of his hosts, a responsiveness, vitalized by just the right amount of appreciation, to the benign advances of his new and important acquaintances.

Bertha, who rejoined the company about this time, gloried in him.

Presently they were all in the parlor, a room furnished with old-fashioned but elegant mahogany pieces, where Mrs. Garrett, with a simple, maternal pride, was careful to show the visitor some of the accomplishments of her talented sons.

There was the Lord's prayer in ornamental penmanship, encased in a frame two feet by three, hanging on the wall, the work of Dan, which Pressley duly admired.

Then an oil painting—a couple on a bridge in a gorge—with “Walter Garrett, Pinxit, 1870” down in one corner, which Pressley declared was indeed very well done.

Nor did the fond mother think that the old and bedaubed palette and the stained brushes, the tools with which genius had wrought, should be without a



somewhat reverential interest for anyone having a decent esteem for the fine things in the world. And, as if to make clear the aptitude of Walter in both art and learning, she drew from a drawer a thesis which he had written at the law school on "Trial by Jury."

The woman displayed all these objects with now and then a word of slight apology, but in each case Pressley found something to say which to her immense satisfaction abundantly vindicated her for indulging herself in bringing them to notice.

But from time to time Bertha could not refrain from having a little fun over this "walk through a museum," as she called it.

"I have told mamma that Dan ought to hang up that Lord's prayer on the lower deck of his steamboat," she said, "where they probably need it more than we do who know it by heart."

"Sho' 'nough those lazy, swearin' roustabouts ought to know what it says," said Mrs. Garrett, "but mo' 'an likely they couldn't read it."

"It ought to be carefully kept," said Pressley. "That particular copy is a second book of Daniel."

"And I have always wondered why mamma didn't send that Mr. and Mrs. Napoleon Crossing the Alps to the Centennial," said Bertha.

"Go 'long," said Mrs. Garrett. "You are always too triflin' with yo' big brothahs."

But Bertha had no quip when Mrs. Garrett lifted a ponderous album from the under shelf of the center table and turned to the photographs of her sons.

Pressley bestowed upon them the compliment of an observation that manifested very great interest. His consideration of them amounted to a study, in which one might have perceived a perplexity, especially when he looked at the photograph of Walter. The two pictures were on opposite sides as the album lay open, and at times Pressley's eyes ran rapidly back and forth between them as if he were seeking to catch the main resemblance and difference.

Mrs. Garrett had no other thought than that, as Pressley had admired the performances of these remarkable young men, he was searching for physiognomic signs of their talent.

Bertha supposed that he was attempting to catch some further truth, though vague, about herself in the countenances of the elder children of the family.

Garrett alone read Pressley's face and understood.

When looking at the photographs Pressley's concern showed itself only for a moment, but from this time on there was solicitude in the older man to put himself, his whole family and even the buildings, fences, trees and acres of the Old Plantation deep into the warmest part of the young man's heart. Here was a stranger who was come closer than any yet before him to the inner life of that dear group in which Garrett stood as elder brother in method of counsel and discipline, and as patriarch in brooding affection and sense of responsibility. The happiness of one member of the family, and in a measure of all members of it, was now being transferred to the keeping of another, and Garrett felt

that he must omit nothing to redeem to unclouded propitiousness the assumption of so precious a charge.

Garrett proposed that he and Pressley get into the buggy and make a tour of the Plantation, which was conveniently divided by roadways, either fenced, making lanes, or by beaten wagon tracks. By the time they returned, he said, the ladies might invite them to dinner.

And so they rode over the fields. Pressley had never seen a farm of this sort. It was new to a youth who had been used to the unfenced, open, prairie homesteads of the west, too often carelessly cultivated and with houses that seemed more like camping places than established homes. Here was the air of thrift, comfort and permanency, with many a testimony to pride in management and the artistic sense in arrangement. It reminded Pressley of what he had read about old-country estates, and it seemed to him that it must fully represent the well-appointed rural seats of the south, on which, and the life there, his fancy had often dwelt.

The latter impression was assisted by a little patch of growing tobacco and cotton.

"I plant it every year," said Mr. Garrett. "More to remind me of the old days and the old home than for anything else, though we make some use of the tobacco. It furnishes the little in various forms that I need or, rather, that I use, and even the cotton is serviceable in raw form for packing or padding as occasion sometimes comes. There is only a little of them, you see,

but the small crop is tended and cured with just as much care as if it covered all my fields."

Garrett talked with the young man about his studies and ambitions, and in this connection discussed to some extent the training and achievements of his own sons; nor was Bertha left out, and it soon appeared to Pressley that the kindly, gray-haired man beside him was as ardent an admirer of that angelic young lady as he was himself. Indeed, at moments he almost felt that he had a rival here whose cunning he needed to fear, and was not wholly untouched by a feeling of jealousy.

In a conversation on such matters some confidences are inevitable, and before the tour was completed Pressley was half under the illusion that he was talking with a school chum of about his own age, recently established as a country gentleman, whom solely he had come to visit on a pressing and familiarly-worded invitation, and not with an elderly man whose face he had not seen until that morning.

It was into an enchanted chamber that Pressley was conducted for dinner. The shutters were closed, the curtains drawn, and the room was illumined with the light of wax candles. They were disposed in silver candelabra that towered moderately high above the table and the tapers shed their rays through globular shades of various hues. These, to Pressley, were radiant orbs in a new firmament, for he felt that he had just made a transition from one universe to another whose elements were more refined.

Several vases of flowers were set here and there,





And then into this glory she walked.



that seemed to have a delicacy of glory and sweetness of perfume not altogether of this earth, or, if so, to be growing more beautiful still in this atmosphere of ecstasy. And the cloth looked as if it might be of the same composition as the lily, while the ware and the plate, Pressley almost fancied, had also bloomed in a garden and been plucked, rather than that they were products that had been moulded and burned, beaten and burnished.

When Mr. Garrett presented himself to escort Pressley to dinner he was wearing evening dress. Pressley thought it singular, but supposed that perhaps it was an odd custom with Mr. Garrett to take dinner so attired, though in the middle of the day, or that it was one of his ways of showing consideration for a guest. Mr. Garrett did not tell him it had been a long time since last he had the swallow-tail on.

Pressley had seen neither of the women since his return from the fields. Mrs. Garrett was in the dining room when he and her husband entered, dressed in airy white. The three waited a moment for Bertha.

And then into this glory she walked, bringing a far more abundant glory with her. Nay, walked not, as it appeared to Pressley. She came by no locomotive machinery of common joints and muscles. She simply appeared in the midst, a door being open, and immediately flowers, radiance and fragrance seemed to refer to her alone. She wore a soft, flowing cream-white, armless gown, cut low. A rose was in her hair and from a necklace of pearls a diamond stole far down the snowy field in front.

Pressley had never seen her thus arrayed. He did not know that she had such resources in her wardrobe. He had never imagined her in evening dress nor, indeed, did he know much more about this costume than he had learned from references to it in novels and illustrations of it in the fashion pages of magazines. He had been taught that it was a vanity or a snare. But Bertha certainly never looked more like an angel to him. She was talking gaily. All were talking. Pressley was talking but he knew not what was being said, no more his own words than those of others. As they sat down, he had a sense of the meanness of his own garb, though he wore a neat summer suit of serge. But he was not awkward. He was excited with delight.

Then came Old Maggie bearing a soup of early potatoes flavored with thyme from the garden. How vulgar and impudent seemed the daylight as it obtruded itself on all this elegance and daintiness through the door that the servant must frequently open!

It was soon a merry party. But for the feminine voices one might have supposed, being in the next room, that a company of jolly youth were banquetting at an inn. The finest cloth Mrs. Garrett possessed was on the board, and several pieces of ware, choice for their make or their history, and of late not often used, seemed to show their satisfaction by gleaming still a little brighter at being taken from sideboard or shelf to do unwonted exercise on the table. And when Old Maggie came with the first out-pour of wine the



venerable demijohn, though now long void and but an idle spectator on this occasion, might have been imagined as rejoicing to see this hour and winking at the cheery little drinking glasses.

Pressley was not asked if he would have wine. The liquor was served by Old Maggie from the bottle, and she filled Pressley's glass as she made the round of the table.

Pressley had not thought about wine. He was, indeed, unfamiliar with drinking glasses. He had noticed the dainty vessels before him but supposed they were for ices or some other dessert. He had never tasted wine save at a communion service. He had grown up with a notion that it was something to be used occasionally, only on a preacher's or a physician's prescription, by saints or sick people.

Mr. Garrett supposed as much as this, and said in way of explanation or apology, as he lifted his sauterne:

"Mr. Pressley, this is the only thing President Boyce takes me to task about. You may not be accustomed to it. Of late years we ourselves have scarcely been. We, too, are pretty good temperance people, yet we have not felt bound to abandon all use of this solvent of souls, which, with us at least, is without danger, and when dear friends come to see us, we feel like having the company also of friendship's oldest friend. It is not strong. Do no violence to your principles, and, whether you lift your glass or not, I know you join me in wishing health, happiness and prosperity to the Old Plantation and everyone upon it."

But Pressley made no scruple about the wine. He was in a new world today. Whatever was here, he was sure, was right. He met Mr. Garrett's goblet with his own so vigorously that it is strange a shower of glass did not mingle with the shower of wine which fell upon the cloth.

"Oh, Mrs. Garrett, can a woman ever forgive that?" cried Pressley, as he looked at the spotted linen.

"Just right," said Mr. Garrett. "A little of that once in a while is a good thing for a table-cloth, and this one hasn't had any for some time."

"Nevah mind it," said Mrs. Garrett, "Indeed, we'll try not to wash it out, so's we shall have something to remembah you by."

"I was about to beg your pardon," said Mr. Garrett. "I know that was a guest's toast, but I have always, since coming to this place, had something of the feeling of a guest—of a guest who was made to 'feel at home.'"

Mr. Garrett was pleased that Pressley had taken the wine. He held the southern gentleman's tradition that it is one of the choice instruments of elegant manners. So much the better if this was Pressley's first introduction to the marvelous medium through which social amenities are so delicately communicated. The effect would be the more definite, and would be prolonged if the experience remained singular.

To put the table under the refining witchery of candle light had also been Mr. Garrett's idea. It was his readily adopted suggestion, too, that the ladies

appear in evening dress, for Bertha was delighted to observe in him a zest to please her lover; nor was it by chance that she was a moment tardy in coming to the dining room, thus imparting to her entry something of the nature of a climax.

"But no other toast is good enough to be proposed until that one has been drunk twice," said Pressley in reply to Mr. Garrett. "I propose it again."

"Good for you, Jim," said Bertha.

Maggie filled the glasses again, and a second libation was offered to this sentiment.

And thus the way was cleared for a troop of toasts in the course of the banquet—to the guest who had always been "at home"; to the guest who had but just come; to the absent members of the family; to the mistress of the Old Plantation.

"To the girl,"—Pressley was saying.

"WE ALL LOVE," cried Mr. Garrett, laughing, and ending the sentence for him.

Old Maggie's duties as a waitress gave her an opportunity for studying this important stranger, which she improved with an assiduity that at times jeopardized the safety of her bountiful burdens. The dinner had not far progressed before it was plain that messengers from her heart were seeking to make their way out upon the bleak field of her face to light it up with signals of approval.

At length, in the dessert stage of the feast, Pressley praised the blackberry pie, and, on being informed that really Bertha herself made it, proposed a toast to

the baker, whereupon Old Maggie, when she had been given to understand what had happened, started as if to throw her arms around him, and then drew back in most shamefaced confusion, while Mrs. Garrett feigned a stern air and Bertha laughed gaily.

But Pressley at once redeemed the old servant from mortification by toasting her, in which he was heartily seconded by Mr. Garrett. She could not well hear what was said, but she comprehended their gestures, and she proceeded to her next duty in much excitement, feeling that she had suddenly been exalted into the company of the great ones of earth.

In the afternoon Pressley and Bertha spent a few hours together, visiting spots on the Old Plantation or in the vicinity, notable in Bertha's happy childhood and girlhood history, such as the tree in the orchard under which she used to play house; the beech wood where in infancy she seemed so far, far from home; the brook under the bridge, which she used to dam; the huge grape vine in the dale that for many summers was her swing, and the little school house where as a five-year-old standing on a desk she would recite "pieces" to the big girls and be told she was a smart little thing—all scenes of more interest to Pressley than could have been any Washington Elms, Black Forests, Tibers, monuments or battlefields.

He could not hear her say enough about her childish experiences. He wished he, too, had been a child in this neighborhood, so that he might always have known Bertha. He was sure he would have loved her



even as a tot and would have continued to be her adorer up through all the years. Quarrels could not have come between them, and no other little miss could possibly have alienated his affections.

"Bertha, your father acts as if he knew," said Pressley.

"I told him this morning," she replied. "I couldn't help it. I can never keep anything from him."

"What did he say?"

"He didn't scold me a bit," she said playfully.

"Did he ever scold you for anything?"

"Never."

"And your mother?"

"I didn't tell her, but I believe she understands well enough."

"Well, I think your father is a good person to let into the secret," said Pressley in a manner that indicated a liking for the old man.

When they returned to the house it was late in the afternoon and Jim spoke of starting home. He was invited to prolong his stay and ride back after sundown, which suggestion he would have been exceedingly glad to follow, but, as he had already told Bertha, he had agreed to be one of a boating party that evening, and he conceived, too, that it would be appreciated by the older folks if, on his first visit to Bertha at her home, he did not stay as long as he possibly could.

But they all insisted that he yet remain long enough to enjoy with them, out under a tree, a little feast of ice cream and cake.

"Cream from our Jerseys and ice from Beechwood Lake," said Mr. Garrett.

When this was over Mr. Garrett went with Pressley to the barn to saddle the horse. As Pressley was buckling the girths the old man slipped off his finger a middling heavy, plain, gold ring and offered it to Pressley, saying:

"Wear it in memory of this day."

Pressley was astonished at this token and request, so rarely passing from man to man, and hesitated.

"Wear it in memory of today," repeated Mr. Garrett.

There was great kindness in the voice, even tenderness, and a minor tone of pleading that Pressley could not understand. He was deeply moved.

"I will," said Pressley, "though I never could forget today. On what finger—Oh, yes, I see, on your third finger. I shall wear it the same," and Pressley was further moved when he observed a slightly sunken band of flattened flesh on the finger where the band of gold had been, indicating that it had been long worn.

Mounted at the front gate Pressley bade the little company collectively good-by, and started his horse.

"Wait a moment," said Mr. Garrett.

With one arm around Bertha's waist and the other behind her knees, he lifted her up against the shoulder of the horse.

"You must kiss the children, you know," said he roguishly.

"Why, of course," said Pressley, and he leaned forward and kissed the girl, not without some blushes on both sides.

"Proper!" exclaimed Mr. Garrett as he lowered the precious burden.

And then, with final adieux, the young man rode away.

## CHAPTER XV.

### DISMANTLEMENT OF PARADISE.

WHEN Pressley awoke the next morning he was in a strange mental condition.

It seemed to him that it was himself, indeed, who had gone down to Bertha's home the morning before, but that another person, wearing his face and figure, had soon superseded him there and completed the visit.

In his own person he had received Bertha's greeting, had been introduced to Mr. Garrett, had brought the dog out of the cellar, had been stunned by conviction on the testimony of his own senses that Mrs. Garrett was not pure white, had struggled a while in this state, and then the other person had entered him and was Jim Pressley for the rest of the day.

"I—I—I—myself—a white man—an Anglo-Saxon—I—it doesn't fit me," was the bewildering thought in the young man's mind.

"How could such a thing happen in reality as that I should be in love with a girl part negro? How could I un-race myself, ex-genate myself, and in an hour become in feeling as much Ethiopian as Caucasian?

"And wine—I do not drink wine. And this gold ring on my finger, a present from a man—I do not get gold rings from men. It is here on my finger, but I—I myself—did not use this hand yesterday. Another



person like me used it. He received the ring from a kind old gentleman who was making love to him. When he got out of my body and let me into it again, of course I got back my hand, and the ring is on it. I do not want the ring.

"And these hands lifting goblets of wine; and this tongue, my own tongue, proposing toasts and clattering merrily at a negro evening party! What a strange place that other fellow took my body to, my hands, my face, my hair, my eyes—every part of me except my real self! I—I—all of me that can be seen—made to act as the lover of a negro belle—as the worshipper of a beautiful African goddess! And where was I all this time—I mean I, Jim Pressley—where was I?"

Pressley could not regret, however, that the "other person" had taken possession of him just when the mystical stranger did, for Jim was satisfied that the usurper had behaved very agreeably as a guest, while the Pressley who was superseded must have cut his visit off abruptly or been miserable all day himself and by his troubled state of mind caused uneasiness and distress to his entertainers.

As yet there had been no conduct on his part that would require explanation and he could at his leisure consider the situation in which he now found himself.

When he went down to Bertha's home he had quite forgotten that his mind had been vexed by any question about her mother, but his very first sensation on seeing Mrs. Garrett was a distinction of race. Slight, indeed, must be the admixture of the baser blood, but un-

doubtedly it was there, and he had been instantly and utterly overcome by the particular significance of the fact, to wit: that as it sharply defined a barrier between him and Mrs. Garrett, it raised a like obstacle between him and Bertha.

He had looked at Bertha, and, as she thought, strangely, for his mind had gone swiftly to a comparison between the older and the younger woman, inquiring if, now that he had seen the mother, he would not be assisted in discerning some shadows of race traits that had heretofore eluded his detection in the daughter. He could see a resemblance in no detail whatsoever, but he was not relieved, holding that Bertha's composition, so fair to every sense, must nevertheless contain an element of crude and despised alloy.

How generously and gallantly, he now reflected bitterly, had he repelled the thought of this, only at length to be rewarded by being brought face to face with the phantom he had denied, to find it was substance and truth!

The fond present in which he was dwelling, the blissful future, on which for months he had been musing, that blessed time to come, filled with love and joy and dignified and glorified by the companionship of Bertha—all vanished in an instant.

His resentment at first was against fortune, but in a moment it was directed against Bertha, for he felt that it was an unpardonable outrage upon him that she had concealed a fact which she must well have

known was of vital pertinency to the relation that was being formed between them.

To be angry, to be even displeased, with Bertha was a sensation absolutely new to him and as painful as it was novel. He strove to subdue his inward perturbation, but, as we have seen, without full success. It was aggravated when Mrs. Garrett conversed with him, because her manner of speaking and frequently the expression on her face continued to confirm the unwelcome truth which he believed he had just discovered.

But when he became engaged alone in conversation with Abner Garrett a singular calm came over his feelings. As Garrett talked about the various phases of the institution of slavery, the characteristics of the enslaved race, the philanthropy of the anti-slavery agitation, and the devotion of heroic souls to the cause of emancipation, a sympathy with the colored race that went remarkably far found a place in Pressley's heart. It was the product of Mr. Garrett's own sympathy, inculcated by the speaker's intelligence, candor and nobly human sensibilities. Pressley was not the first who had fallen under the spell of this man's words when he was talking on a serious subject with which he was familiar, and especially if his convictions trembled with the electricity of the emotions.

Pressley made a race concession and personally what might be called a race surrender, not unconditional, indeed, but sufficiently indulgent to put him at perfect ease regarding a union with Bertha, and an alliance

with her family. If he could not see the slightest indication of colored blood in Bertha, Pressley concluded it was foolish and unreasonable, as well as tormenting, to worry about the matter, and he resolved he would do so no more. And besides, had he not a lesson before his eyes? Were not the races, as observable, mingled in this very home, and yet was it not a home of tender affections, of intelligence, of comfort, of elegance? What in a home could a man want more?

This impression kept growing in decisiveness and confirming itself in Pressley's mind the longer he remained at the Old Plantation and the more the influences there, personal and impersonal, operated upon his susceptibilities. For, besides the overflow of graciousness on all sides from the hearts of his hosts, not the least part of which was the fine affability of Mr. Garrett, Pressley was sensible of a most pleasing charm coming from the atmosphere that lay over the place.

But on awakening in the morning he was, as indicated by the inarticulate soliloquy we have quoted, confused, disappointed, ashamed, even remorseful. It seemed to him, and possibly the remembrance of the wine suggested it, that he had been on some refined debauch, induced not by any gross or common excitant, but by a subtle element that had stolen upon his senses unawares.

He was sick of the day before.

His conduct then now seemed to him most strange. He remembered it as if it had been a dream. So far



away from himself, as he now understood himself, had his excitement carried him that he was prone to attribute it to impulses of a wholly exterior origin. A possession, at least an obsession, "that other fellow," was the explanation which presented itself to his bewildered faculties as the most plausible. He felt that he had been tricked. Mr. Garrett's charming manners? They had been but wiles to seduce him into a position that no white man could assume. The illuminated dining room? Artfully contrived stage for a matinee performance in which he was to be an actor but which nevertheless was to produce upon him a perfect illusion.

He pulled from his finger the gold ring Mr. Garrett had given him and flung it to the floor.

"In memory of this day," he repeated in disgust.

Then a wave of shame overcame him, and he picked the ring up, affected even again and now by the manner of Mr. Garrett's address when the memento was bestowed.

"I wonder if she really meant not to tell me," he said, moving his lips to the words but not speaking aloud, "thinking that when I found out, the matter would have gone so far that I couldn't let her go. Oh, I do love you—I did love you, darling girl—but I cannot give up my manhood! I cannot lose the respect of all white men! I cannot make myself over and be somebody else!"

But there was Mr. Garrett. Had he lost the respect of all white men? Did not President Boyce and Prof.

Bland express high esteem for him? Did they not go to his home to dine? And yet would they imitate him in the particular about which Pressley was just now thinking most?

And the preacher was also in love with Bertha, and he must know. "Shiftless Henry," too, had a fancy for her, though, to be sure, how "Shif" was affected by any person or thing did not signify much.

And thus began a long conflict between Pressley's judgment and his affection, torturing to the mind in which it raged.

On this particular morning his love, heretofore at all times steadily ardent, was most woefully capricious, agitated as violently as a barometer when the forces of calm and storm are contending for mastery in the air. At one moment he was in the nightmare of despising her. At another all his former seasons of tenderest adoration were surpassed.

It was his intention to write to her this very day to declare that all communication between them must cease, assigning the reason therefor, and return the ring Mr. Garrett had given him. But he did not carry out this resolution. The ruin was too awful to be so soon recognized as inevitable. As yet the crisis lay wholly within his own breast. Perhaps, after all, it might there be subdued. Possibly his thoughts and feelings, after a hard wrestling with it, might yet turn it away.

Later in the day Pressley had occasion to go to the drug store kept by J. E. C. F. Harper, commonly

called "Alphabet" Harper from the number of his initials, and it was even while asking himself if it were not possible that he might be mistaken about Mrs. Garrett that he overheard the last part of a conversation between the druggist and a stranger, both old residents, that was relevant to this question.

"No, she wasn't allowed to testify," the druggist was saying as Pressley went in. "She claimed, and always did claim, though they didn't insist on it at the trial, that there was no African blood in her, but said there was some creole in her. People generally thought this was only an excuse, and I guess it was. I didn't see her very often. It didn't show much, but what did show looked darkey to me. She was a mighty pretty woman, just the same, when she was young. One boy shows it more than she does, and you wouldn't call it creole in him. The other boy is whiter than I am."

"I never saw much of Garrett," said the stranger. "'Peared like a nice kind of a man, but, of course, his wife being what she was, the family 'peared kind of unnat'ral."

Plain enough to Pressley. Of course it was an excuse because it was the only thing that could have been made to serve as such. And Pressley did not fail to note in the conversation he had just heard the use of the past tense, when the present might have been employed, as if the Garrett family, in real interest, had ceased to be. Besides, Pressley was now reminded of an impression he had received, but scarcely recognized,

when at the Old Plantation, that the life of Abner Garrett and his wife was one of considerable seclusion. This fact, for such he took it to be, he now comprehended the more clearly because a significance was apparent.

"I guess the old gentleman's not so rich as he used to be," said the stranger, resuming after a pause, to the druggist.

"Not by any means," replied Mr. Harper. "His boys have been heavy spenders. Always had anything they wanted and he was never able to deny them a cent. The one who came down the river the other day with a new steamboat—a steamboat is a pretty costly plaything."

Pressley lingered in the store, hoping to hear more, but that was all.

For several days he avoided being on the streets save early in the morning or in the evening, lest by chance Bertha should have come to town and he should meet her. Meanwhile he did not write to her, for his state of mind alternated so rapidly that he feared any expression he made to her might be repented of before the letter could reach her, and to write to her and refrain from any reference to his distress, it seemed to him, would amount to dissimulation if, indeed, it would not be altogether impossible.

Near the end of the week Pressley received an urgent invitation to spend the summer with old friends on an Iowa farm where in years past he had frequently been received as a member of the family and where



through two vacations he had as a farm hand received the dues of a hired servant and at the same time enjoyed the privileges of a son. In the family was a youth of his own age who had been his chum at the high school, and Pressley was loved by the parents. In this instance, also, he was promised recompense of two kinds, from the hand and from the heart, and the double offer was instantly and gladly accepted.

Pressley felt that there was a kindly fortune in his receipt of this invitation, opening up to him something like a refuge or at least an entire change in his surroundings, where he would be sure to find some relief from his present distraction. He was anxious to run away, hoping that at a distance he might get such a view of College Hill, the Old Plantation and Bertha as to give him a clearer apprehension of what his situation required.

So, giving no more thought of going over into Kentucky to engage in the novel labor of picking peaches, he prepared forthwith to depart for Iowa.

And now he wrote to Bertha, but only a short note, informing her that he was going, and in a style calculated to imply that his haste to get off might excuse the brevity of his announcement. Those words that belong pre-eminently in the vocabulary of love were few, and Pressley's ingenuousness and sense of honor were outraged by his consciousness that such as were there were now used conventionally or with mental reservation. He purposely omitted telling her where to address a letter to him, not being sure that he would

desire to receive one from her. He felt like burning some, if not all, bridges behind him as he fled. He closed his note, however, by saying that he would write again soon. He left for Iowa that evening.

The deficiencies in this note alarmed Bertha. Certainly it would be a joy to Pressley to spend the summer with old friends in Iowa, but if he felt that he would be paying anything for it in a long absence from her he did not say so. He expressed no regret that he was going so far away nor a hope that he might often hear from her. And would it have taken more than a dozen words to tell who and where his friends were, a matter which he must have known would have been of great interest to her? Nor could she understand, when her home was but two hours from his, why his love had not impelled him to see her again, in the prospect of so long an absence, and say farewell in person. The announcement that he would write again soon, instead of being simply a pleasing assurance, seemed rather an apology, inadequate enough, for the brevity, the reticence and the coldness of the communication.

Bertha's first tears as a maiden in love were shed over these few lines signed "Jim." She felt that she was no longer all the world to a serious, steadfast and devoted lover, but that as a boy's plaything she had been quickly abandoned for a holiday. Yet it was through consideration of the boy in him that, in the following days, she fully forgave him. He had seen her but a few days ago. He might be reluctant to

run the risk of having his ardor declared foolishness by older heads on account of a speedy reappearance at her home, and a schoolboy's enthusiasm over a vision of familiar and beloved fields and faces, on a vacation, and an impulse to leap into the reality of it might have distracted one, who was still a novice at writing love letters, sufficiently to make a wholly satisfactory letter impossible.

On the Iowa farm Pressley imagined, as if looking with the sun down from the sky, College Hill, Madison, the stony roads, the smooth pikes, the heavy woods and the Old Plantation, five hundred miles away, and saw even himself as an actor in tender scenes there. The fact of intervening distance did, indeed, somewhat fortify him as he recollected all that had happened there and contemplated the dismantlement of the paradise that this quiet little corner of the world had been to him. For no more would he there walk in the company of an angel. And so in the summer love's springtime work was undone. Not because it had not been well done, not through levity or fickleness or faithlessness, but with reluctance on the one side and pleading on the other, under the grievous and compelling goad of what is always a woeful surprise to lovers—a sentiment more imperious than love itself.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### STRUGGLE OF TWO HEARTS.

ONE evening as Bertha was riding home from the country postoffice a few people, at different points on the road, saw her crying, and one or two persons caught a glimpse of her thus when at the same time they observed that she held a letter in her hand.

It was her first letter from Pressley in Iowa, and its effect on Bertha, thus noticed as she read it on horseback, furnished the neighborhood, as time proved, with a clue to the distress she was soon known to feel.

Along with the letter, in a little package by itself, came the ring that Abner Garrett had given to Pressley.

It happened that as Bertha drew near home she met the former, who, on an evening walk, had gone a little distance up the highway. He saw at once that she was deeply troubled. Before he could ask a question she handed him the opened box in which lay the ring, and then began to cry afresh.

"The ring!" said Garrett in almost a whisper. "Which I gave him to remember that happy day! So soon!"

"Pressley, then?" he continued, looking up at Bertha.

With her face still in her handkerchief she handed him the letter.

"Get down, child," said he.



She dismounted and he put his arms around her. Child again in the old man's arms, but not this time with a broken doll. A graver perplexity. A broken heart!

As they stood thus, close to the pony that was nibbling the grass by the roadside, Mr. Garrett read the letter. It was not long, but in it the young man recapitulated the whole of the recent experience of his heart. He described how sincere had been his affection, how great had been his joy, and he did not omit a lamentation that both had been built on a false foundation. He told her that what he had first learned from Gassler, and refused to believe, he had confirmed by personal observation.

He asked for no information or explanation from Bertha, assuming, as if beyond question, not only that, through her mother, though Bertha's appearance seemed to abundantly contradict it, she was of mixed blood, but that with unpardonable design of imposition she had refrained from acquainting him with this fundamental fact concerning herself, which he had an imperative right to know.

There was no upbraiding further than his plain statement of the essential facts as he now felt sure they were. He intimated, in short, that, while he had acted with the good faith and perfectly open heart of an honest and ardent lover, her conduct had been somewhat like that of an adventuress. He did not, indeed, deny that she fondly loved him, but she had sought to guard his love for her with an unjustifiable concealment.

"I wish I had told him," said Mr. Garrett regretfully as he finished reading the letter.

"Told him what, papa?" eagerly asked the tearful girl.

Mr. Garrett had not spoken to her but to himself, as if momentarily forgetful of her presence. Her quick question, therefore, put him into a confusion which, however, she was in no state to notice.

"Why, told him—told him that if at any time anything, no matter what, should seem to rise between you he should see me."

"Isn't mamma just as white as you?" asked Bertha.

"Your mother is just as white as I."

"Well, there's no negro in you, is there?"

"Not a drop, nor in your mother."

"What could Jim mean—what could he mean?" repeated the girl, while Mr. Garrett remained silent pretending to appear as one seeking in his mind for some hypothesis to hazard as the possible solution of a mystery.

"What could he mean?" again repeated Bertha with still more emphasis. "He says that what he had already learned from Gassler was confirmed by personal observation."

"My child, in the bitterness of the anti-slavery agitation people used to tell all sorts of stories about those who were friends of the negro. A man once travelled thirty miles for the sole purpose of seeing Mrs. Boyce and so finding out for himself if she was a colored woman, as he had been told she was. Perhaps

stories like that have been told about my wife, and an echo of them has reached Pressley's ears at this late day. As for his personal observation, his judgment might have been vitiated by the prejudice of the report."

Mr. Garrett now suggested that they go on home. He led the horse and Bertha walked with him.

"It does seem hard, very hard, my dear child," said he on the way, "but think of all the love and sunshine still about you."

"But, papa, if I should tell Jim he was mistaken"—but she interrupted herself with "Yet think of what he has imputed to me!" and a high resentment could be seen in her face, accompanied by an impressive pride.

"I believe he means it to be final," said Mr. Garrett.

"Now, Bertha," he continued with much concern, "let us keep this entirely from your mother—not that Pressley has ceased to feel interest in you, for she will know that before long, but the reason for it—you can easily understand how much pain that would give her."

To this Bertha assented, and while the two walked home no further word was spoken between them.

No sleep came that night to either.

The next day Bertha wrote the following letter to Pressley:

*Dear Jim:*

Your letter seems to forbid that I should still call you so, but I will say "dear," though now it is but a fond tradition.

You invite no reply, but I must let you know how surprised I am at the "conviction" you express, and at the summary manner in which you have acted upon it, inasmuch as it is wholly false. I cannot account for it.

I thought that our love had the good foundation of an admiring understanding of each other's character. I thought it well-grounded, and certainly a love so full of the promise of happiness ought not to be wrecked for any reason not founded on fact, and, though I cannot see how the truth can restore it now, I must tell you with all the assurance any statement of mine ever carried that you are entirely mistaken in the charge you make against my mother.

But, bad as was this mistake and humiliating and disgraceful as was the opinion of me it gave you, you made another much worse. Your presumption that I sought to hold your love by concealment, by fraud—it seems to me you could have sunk me to no lower depth than that. If your own heart would not protect me from that blow, then any word from me is useless.

It is inconceivable to me how you came to think or write as you did. If you had desired an excuse for breaking an attachment of which you had grown tired, it seems to me you might have found one less absurd, cruel and insulting.

BERTHA.

She did not recount, as she might, in regret that it was turned to bitterness, the happiness she had recently experienced and that which she had been anticipating from the golden chain of years in the future. She did not review the delightful hours they had spent together. She did not protest the depth and ardor of her love. She did not remind him of the preciousness of their mutual affection, which should not be sacrificed on any conceivable account. She did not implore that, now his error was made known, he love her still.

She did not, in short, tell him, as she might have done, that her heart was breaking.

Overcoming the excuse-finding, the magnanimity, the forgiveness there is in love, the dominant feeling in Bertha's heart was indignation. There was mourning; there were inward prayers; there was longing for



return; there were times when all passions were fused in nothing but tears, yet above these again would anger arise, moderate but ruling.

As to mending this love, thus broken with a crash, Bertha had little hope of that, for so deeply offended was her sense of personal and family pride that, whatever Pressley might do now, she feared she never could forgive him.

Abner Garrett was grieving also to a degree Bertha did not suspect and for reasons, going beyond paternal sympathy, which lay hidden from her.

On her return from the postoffice, after mailing her reply to Pressley, Garrett was again up the road a little way to meet her.

"You have replied to him?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, and then in response to the further inquiry written on his face she continued:

"It was very short. I only told him it was not true and that he had insulted us all."

"Suppose he takes your word for it?"

"I don't know. I feel it would seem to me that the fact that he ever could have those things in his mind about us spoiled him forever."

"But I fear he will not take your word," said the old man. "Well, you ride along, and I'll be in shortly."

On the receipt of Bertha's letter Pressley was thrown again into a distressful period of repentance, doubt and vacillation. Of course it could not be true. Bertha had given him her solemn assurance, and Bertha could not be untruthful. Moreover, there

never was enough evidence of it to justify the throwing away of the choicest jewel in all the world and the relinquishment of such happiness, actual and prospective, as was never a man's before. If she could only forgive him his hasty error and gross offense he would be her lover again as he had been before his mind was poisoned by that miserable Gassler and vitiated further by his own ill-considered thoughts. He would hasten to ask her forgiveness and pray to be restored, blessed above all other mortals, to that place in her heart which he had so foolishly abandoned.

These were his thoughts for an hour, to be succeeded in the next by the former suspicion and conviction, which, when a few days were passed by, were again predominant. The common opinion, he thought, was not likely to be wrong. He had heard it expressed by Mr. Harper at the drug store. And he himself, who had seen with his own eyes, could not be mistaken, else there were things about the appearances of white and colored people that he was not aware of.

But Bertha's letter and some reflection had convinced him of one mistake, which was thinking that the girl had concealed from him a knowledge which she knew must be incompatible with the relation they had assumed. This he did not now believe. He could understand how likely it was that she was brought up in ignorance of a fact which was disgraceful to the family and which, though commonly known, was yet not so patent as to come to her notice without special obtrusion. Pressley found a great satisfaction in this

conception which left Bertha's character as fair as before. In his reply to her, therefore, he relieved her of any odium in this respect with the most gracious phrases he could construct, while at the same time reiterating his conviction of the main fact, on account of which he declared any thought of marriage must be abandoned.

By Bertha this was interpreted as but offering a disingenuous compromise to her feelings, and in her mind she could not allow to Pressley the full integrity which he had ended by conceding to her, for she believed that Jim was fickle and, moreover, not without malevolence in resorting to so offensive a subterfuge to cover his inconstancy.

And it was what Pressley had first learned from Gassler! So, then, he had been discussing her and her family with the vagabond shoemaker, whom he knew she despised, and had received from him a calumny of her that he, a lover, had nursed and fostered in secret and finally adopted for his own! And this man, for whom she had always felt a strong aversion without knowing exactly why, was become the author of her present great misfortune! He was now developed in her mind to something like an evil genius.

A notion this was which in a few days there was some reason to consider confirmed, for Gassler had again migrated back to the neighborhood, and, following her one evening out of the postoffice near which was his little shop, he said to her:

"Noticed ye goin' home the other night with a

letter and cryin'. Makes me feel awful bad to see ye cryin'. Thought maybe it was your feller. Must remember there hain't no feller in the world worth cryin' over. If ever ye get into any trouble and I can do the least thing fer ye, be sure to let me know."

While he was speaking, Bertha was untying her horse and preparing to mount, and did not look around, but as he finished she turned and said angrily:

"I don't thank you for any curiosity or concern you have about my affairs, Mr. Gassler."

"Oh, don't be mad at me," said he. "I'm the best friend ye got."

Bertha had mounted and was riding away. She made no reply, but gave the pony the whip.

"I 'low that old granddaddy's tryin' to shine up to that girl," said one man to another in a little group under a tree.

There was really a tenderness in Gassler's first remarks to Bertha and a tone of genuine coaxing in the last, but in his words the girl heard only meddling impudence and taunt.

"After all that," thought she, "he is mean and brazen enough to try to get me to say something from which he might judge whether his slander had borne fruit or not."

It was not long before the curiosity of certain ones in the neighborhood carried them so far as to embolden them to attempt to learn directly from the Garrett family the cause of Bertha's weeping on horseback with a letter in her hand. Reports of Pressley's at-



tentions to Bertha had given rise to some gossip in the community, but it was of a languid sort inasmuch as it was based on information from which no important inferences could be well drawn; but this little scrap of evidence, confirming the rumors of an engagement by announcing its peril or rupture, set many tongues to a welcome exercise. Evidence, certainly, for what but lover's letter can make a young lady of eighteen weep?

In a few days Mrs. Anthony heard the news and immediately hurried herself to the Old Plantation to express to Mrs. Garrett her concern lest the family had received bad tidings, and, in this event, to ask if she could be of any possible service. But Mrs. Garrett could only show her surprise, not having heard of the weeping until now.

"Oh, well, then, 'twas no bad news from any of the folks," said Mrs. Anthony, pretending to feel relieved. "Jest somethin' on Bertha's account, and couldn't have been anything much or she'd have mentioned it."

Just then Mrs. Anthony took new hope, for Bertha came in, and the old lady again explained the object of her visit.

Bertha affected to be astonished. Been seen crying while holding a letter? She couldn't understand it. Might, of course, have been rubbing dust from her eyes.

And Mrs. Anthony went away, greatly disappointed, to inquire from "Shiftless" at the supper table more particularly about the preciseness of his information, and to be assured that it was tears, not dust, that Bertha had wiped from her eyes.

"Shiftless" now took the matter in hand, and luckily Mr. Garrett had engaged him to do some mending of the fences the very next day, when he had an opportunity of speaking to Bertha in the most informal and familiar way. She had stepped across the yard to watch him for a few minutes at his work.

"Whath thith I hear about you, Bertha?" said he. "Havin' trouble with your feller already?"

"Did you hear I was having trouble with some one?" she asked listlessly.

"Well, next thing to it," he replied. "Cryin' over a letter he thent you."

"You know, then, the letter was from him?"

"Well, I 'low mutht ha' been from him or you wouldn't ha' been cryin' over it."

"Sure I was crying?"

"Oh, I reckon you'll deny the hull thing, but I 'low there ith something right smart in it, and I don't care, 'cauthe if Prethley ithn't the feller, it'll be some one nearder to home 'at will make you probably a better huthband. When it cometh to marryin' you couldn't do better 'n to take thome feller 'at don't put on any airs or pretenthion, but 'th knowed you all your life."

Bertha was laughing for the first time in several days, and "Shiftless" for the first time in his life seemed vexed by her. He reddened, drove a nail wrong and said:

"What I thay ith tho, Bertha."

But he got from her no word by which he might in the least degree confirm the hope of an estrangement.

In the next week or ten days a few others threw out "feelers," all of them to Mr. Garrett, as they chanced to meet him, and always with the excuse that they had heard a report that bad news had come from one of the boys. Mr. Garrett assured them all that there was no foundation for the apprehension that ill-fortune had arrived from any quarter to any member of the family.

Nevertheless the conjecture prevailed in the community that Bertha had been a party to a lover's quarrel, for, the essential data having been resolved and digested, several points were established:

Bertha and Pressley had been fond of each other in the spring at school.

He had visited her later at her home.

The postmaster attested that she received a letter addressed with a man's hand from a town in Iowa.

Bertha was seen crying while reading this letter.

She had the next day mailed a letter to Pressley in Iowa.

She received before long another letter from the Iowa town, no doubt in response, and none since.

And it was plain that a deep trouble was in her heart.

It was true that her buoyancy and gaiety had vanished and given place to a seriousness through which could be observed frequently the melancholy on which it was based. It was as if a sunny landscape had become beclouded or, rather, laid waste. None of her formerly engaging faculties were in vigor. No flowers of grace were blooming. When she went out on her

pony she did not go galloping over the neighborhood highways to draw up at front gates here and there and, with a merry cry, call out girl friends for a chat, or pitch over the fence some informal salutation to a family group.

Rather, for her now infrequent journeys on horseback, would she choose the road by the river where, if she met people, they were as likely as not to be strangers, or she would confine her equestrian exercise to the fieldside roadways within the borders of the home acres. She gave up going to the postoffice, for in the window of the cobbler's shop or at its door she was sure to see the unwelcome face of Gassler if she did not squarely encounter his whole form and figure between dismounting and remounting.

Acquaintances of Bertha's own age, who made friendly calls, soon marked the absence of her wholesome and contagious vivacity and discovered her listless on the whole range of topics commonly coming up at such interviews.

And likewise Bertha's habits changed toward members of her own family. Heretofore Abner Garrett's horse had often been beside her own on the short excursions in the saddle, but now it was never seen there, nor did the gray-haired man and the blooming girl now engage in various lawn sports or mere wanton child's play, as they had not infrequently done of yore.

The girl never spoke to Mr. Garrett about her heartache after telling him the contents of Pressley's second



letter. She preferred to let the trouble be her own, especially since it could not be mended by intervention, sympathy or counsel, and Mr. Garrett seemed to think it was better so. Yet he little suspected the nature of some of the thoughts that occasionally, as time passed on, arose in Bertha's mind. They were, indeed, of the purport that, after all, Pressley might be right. And if he were, then she had been the victim since her infancy, as she expressed it to herself, of a parental policy of secrecy and even of deceit. But could this be from the tenderest of fathers, who had been her mentor, her companion and her confidant at all the ages of her life?

It was hard for her to harbor this thought, but come it would. It was sometimes this which impelled her to resist when Mr. Garrett, for her much-needed diversion, sought to coax her into a frolic of some sort in the yard or into the playing of some simple game, and he sometimes found her eyes resting upon him with such a look of scrutiny and inquiry as would make him wince. To him it was a thousand times worse than it ordinarily is to a parent when he finds that his child, of whatever age, is intent on reading him deeper than he has been willing to open the book.

At such times Mr. Garrett would forthwith find solitude to wonder at the strangeness of the girl, and engage in gloomy reflection. He was not indifferent to the trial that was upon her. Indeed, if both hearts could have been looked into it might have been hard to tell which of these two persons was grieving most,

she as the direct sufferer, or he on her account. But it was to her the first and, so far, the only great sorrow. It was to him but one more added to many sorrows.

If Bertha had this questioning in her mind it may be readily imagined that Mrs. Garrett became the subject of her most anxious consideration. Loving her fondly, Bertha felt some sense of unfaithfulness and wrong-doing in trying the experiment of looking at her through Pressley's eyes, but she could not refrain, and sometimes she would turn and hurry away in a fright, believing she saw what Pressley believed he had seen. The effect upon her was as if she had witnessed some sorcery that had made beloved features repugnant; that had spirited away her mother and set some gross travesty in the place of her. Then would the poor girl, following the uncertain impulses of her confused heart, feel that she had sinned a great sin and break into tears. Repentance and self-correction would soon ensue. The illusion would be banished and there again was just the same simple, constant, darling, motherly mother as ever.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### "A MINISTER'S WOOING."

BERTHA had often thought over every detail of Pressley's visit at her home, and now at last she believed she had discovered the secret of his strange behavior in the early part of that day. It was the physical appearance of her mother. This was the confirmation by personal observation that Pressley meant. She went to the parlor, opened the big album and looked at the photographs of Walter and Dan to see if the view would create any new impression, and for the first time in her life she was struck by the difference in their features. It seemed so fundamental as almost to deny that they were brothers, and at this moment she was conscious that, like Jim, she looked with more favor upon the face of Dan than upon that of Walter. But the preference was strange to her, and seemed evil, and she loathed and strove to belie it.

However, these hours when Bertha completely yielded the argument to Jim were not constant. They were but occasional. When they came they brought with them a large if not a full measure of vindication in her sore heart for Jim. She could then concede that a powerful motive had impelled him to wreck the beautiful fabric their two hearts had wrought, and could understand how bitter must have been the

strivings in his mind before the blow of ruin was struck. She could even sympathize with him in his struggle, and, all fault being removed from him and laid on necessity, she was fully in love with him again.

Then would follow an alternate and far longer period of reaction, with Bertha penitent and remorseful for having been a traitress, as she felt, to parental and fraternal affection, to family pride and dignity. At such times Mr. and Mrs. Garrett, but especially the latter, would be surprised at the multitude of filial kindnesses on Bertha's part, and Walter, in these seasons, always received so many letters from his "little sister" that really he could not find time to answer them.

Mrs. Garrett, who had not at any time been taken into confidence respecting this important matter, and, left only to a mother's usually shrewd conjectures in such cases, made no mistake except in estimating the depth of the attachment that existed, or had existed, between Bertha and Pressley. She was perhaps disqualified by nature from doing so.

Without authority from Bertha, and with Mr. Garrett pretending that he had no more knowledge than she, Mrs. Garrett had not assumed that the mutual attraction had matured into an engagement, and now that disaster was evident she chose to regard the whole matter as no more serious than a school-boy and school-girl affair. Sometimes, therefore, when she noticed that Bertha was unusually sad or preoccupied she would say to her:



"I'm afraid yo' bein' foolish again ovah that boy Pressley."

"Oh, Pressley's nothing, mamma," Bertha would answer.

"Well, I wish you thought so all the time," would be the response as Mrs. Garrett looked at her with an air of mild reproach.

And half-blind, half-deaf, diligent Old Maggie—how had she seen or heard the secret of Bertha's trouble? Or from her imperfect observation of the girl's behavior had she simply divined it? For it was evident that she knew it well, and it was in the secluded heart of this plain creature, partly cut off from ordinary communication with others, that the only full, unbounded sympathy for Bertha lay.

This showed itself in simple and quiet ways. Never had Old Maggie, though always neat and precise, been so particular about the care of Bertha's room. Never were the bedclothes so softly laid, the pillows so plump with yielding balm. If Bertha's rubbers got muddy and were laid off even for but a short while, lo! they were clean again. The girl found her favorite dishes coming with unwonted frequency but with well-managed rotation to the table.

Sometimes, when Bertha was about to undertake some common, menial task, Old Maggie would offer to relieve her, and when, as occasionally happened, Old Maggie combed and brushed the young lady's hair, her hand was as careful as a mother's dressing a baby's curls. In short, she treated her, so far as she min-

istered to her, with the extraordinary tenderness commonly accorded to the ill. Now and then, after putting Bertha's room in order, she would set a little bouquet on the table.

"Brother Charlie" had been quick to learn all that the neighborhood knew about Miss Bertha, her letters and her tears. Indeed, many of the women of his flock on this side the river, who had expected to have the joy of imparting to him his original information on this engaging theme, were disappointed and mortified at the frequency with which he said "So I have heard" as the details were delivered.

On coming to fill his first regular monthly appointment after this gossip arose he had at once an interview with Gassler, and he forthwith determined that another season of pastoral visitation was immediately required.

It was observed that on the occasion of this interview the preacher remained a long while in the cobbler's shop. It was supposed by the few whose errands to the postoffice gave them a knowledge of it that the faithful minister was now giving Sinner Gassler "a good one," and one or two pious persons offered mental prayers that the quick-tempered and profanity-prone shoemaker might be moved. Some who passed by noticed that the conversation was in a low tone and so earnest that now and then Gassler stopped work and shook his awl, his knife or his hammer in "Brother Charlie's" face. As the latter did not draw back, it was supposed that these gestures stopped at being emphatic and did not go on to become really menacing.

It was well recognized that Gassler's singing at Sunday school was with an unconsecrated voice and with only a profane love of song, and that he was on the whole a tough block for an evangelist.

But the preacher was not seeking to convert him. The sole theme of their discussion was Bertha, and when their talk was ended the preacher got on his horse and rode to the Old Plantation, having a notion that Bertha's heart might now, torn and broken, more readily admit him than heretofore, and answering a feeble remonstrance of conscience with the adage that all is fair in love and war.

"Brother Charlie," without much real expense of wit for jokes, had secured a reputation for being "full of fun," and at once on meeting the family at the old Plantation he undertook some verbal sport. Bertha gave him kind for kind, as in former times, putting the smiles and laughter in the figurative brackets set up for them in the lively exchange of pleasantries. The preacher had been told that the girl had not been seen to smile for a month, and he was delighted with the conclusion that his presence was most welcome to her. He had had no hope of beginning his visit under such propitious auspices.

Mr. and Mrs. Garrett were likewise astonished and pleased, and immensely increased the preacher's joy by uniting in saying that whereas, for some reason, Bertha had been acting very soberly this summer, "Brother Charlie" seemed to have brought her to herself again.

It was with great pleasure that Mrs. Garrett learned from her husband several weeks previously that "Brother Charlie" had proposed to Bertha. Mrs. Garrett had the notion, that was still quite prevalent among devout people a generation or two ago, that ministers of the gospel stood close to angels and that, as the latter were not eligible for husbands, preachers were next best. The girl who married a minister might forego alluring temporal prospects, but was more than compensated by intimate companionship with one in a holy calling.

Though Abner Garrett justly rated the ministry the noblest profession in the world, he was yet of such a disposition as that in giving a daughter in marriage he would, under ordinary circumstances, attach very great importance to the merely temporal qualifications of the prospective husband, like family connections, social position and prosperity; yet, as suggested in a previous chapter, he seemed to have peculiar reasons for desiring that Bertha should meet the preacher's advances. So he and his wife contrived, with one excuse and another, that Bertha and "Brother Charlie" should be left alone together the greater part of the evening. The young preacher prided himself on his facility in throwing off ministerial dignity—unbending, he called it—and only once in the evening did he fall into the style of the parson. This was when he thought a fine opening had presented itself for a telling expatiation on the wonderful opportunities for doing good possessed by a minister's wife.



Bertha responded by an expression of pity for the being so fortunately situated and treating the whole subject with flippant irony.

"Brother Charlie" had been getting so certain that Bertha, pushed from Pressley's arms, was now ready to fly to his, that he was about to break the resolution with which he came to the house and speak to her directly on the matter, but her latter remarks disquieted and disturbed him. He decided to further test his ground a little.

"What is the latest word about your friend, Mr. Pressley?" he asked.

"Oh, Jim is spending his vacation in Iowa," Bertha replied, "and is having a splendid time. I hear from him. He writes very interesting letters from there."

This was painfully perplexing to "Brother Charlie."

Mr. Garrett, approaching from the lawn, where he had been musing, heard it, too, and observed with regret, but yet with admiration, that Bertha was something of a strategist. When he had sat down, the girl, breaking under the strain of the part she had been playing, hurried to her room and sobbed herself to sleep.

The next morning Bertha was apparently as gay as the traditional lark and fully ready, as on the previous evening, to meet the preacher at badinage; observing the change in her behavior Old Maggie was manifestly delighted, and flitted to and fro and about the breakfast table so lightly and so cheerily that the family were surprised, for none of them had realized how

much she knew of Bertha's heart or how much her own had suffered on account of the girl's disappointment.

Nor did Bertha seek to circumvent the parental plan that she and "Brother Charlie" should be companions afoot up through the woodside pasture to church, where the pastor in his discourse said "Je-rooz-alum" many times with all the unction he could muster. He returned with the Garretts for dinner, but soon thereafter saddled his horse and went directly for a further interview with Gassler to verify his information concerning the recent history and deportment of the belle of the Old Plantation.

He made several visits to the Garrett home later in the season, sometimes in mid-week, and on each occasion Bertha affected an air of contentment and light-heartedness to receive him, yet he knew that this was but a cloak worn while he was being entertained, and, realizing that she was seeking to deceive him regarding the lay of the ground, he felt that his advances should be most cautious, and that for the time being he should rely on his mere manner and general conversation, rather than on any pointed words, to further his progress.

And so the summer passed. The only real diversion Bertha had was when, on several occasions—too rare, indeed—"Shiftless" would ask her if it was not about time she "wath having another feller, thome feller who really knowed her and who she really knowed." He did not allow that the preacher really knew her.

This would furnish Bertha with material for laughter that, as memory drew on it every hour or two, would sometimes last a whole day. So acceptable, so restorative was it that the girl more than once sought, when convenient, a renewal of the supply. "Shiftless" was always ready with this bounty, but, constituted by nature for extremely deliberate motions, he besides held the doctrine that one should never proceed so slowly as when in love, and he never allowed his passion to become so impetuous as to hasten him.

All told, though she had been abruptly and rudely repelled, Bertha could not move her heart, as, indeed, she at last wilfully tried to do, away from Pressley. He entered many of her night dreams, some of which were so joyful that her heart ached the more on waking to find them but dreams; some so grievous with the waking trouble in them that a flood of real tears would awake her.

Often she found herself wishing she might get a letter from Jim saying he might be mistaken, and, whether or no, that he would cleave unto her forever.

As for Pressley, he had his continuing agony, too. His friends in Iowa thought he had changed much in the short time he had been in Indiana. They were surprised that the rollicking, fun-loving boy had developed into so sober, not to say gloomy, a young man.

Many a time he fought the whole battle over, and always to the same stern issue, against the acceptance of which, however, though his judgment did not relent

in commanding it, his affections were always in rebellion. He longed for some means of circumvention. If she were only Abner Garrett's daughter and not Mrs. Garrett's as well! If she only were an adopted child, daughter of anybody! Or if he might take her far away where nobody knew about her, and abide with her there!

In the autumn a grief more easily understood by the common mind than the woe of a heart bruised at love, and one eliciting a sympathy unmixed with jest, fell upon the whole household at the Old Plantation, for the word came that Walter had died of yellow fever in New Orleans under unusual and mysterious circumstances.

His wife had been stricken, and while suffering with this dreadful malady was forced to undergo the added jeopardy involved in bringing a child into the world. Her peril was extreme and in proportion was the anxiety of her husband. She was soon convalescent from her double illness, and it was reported as the conjecture of the physician that only in the danger attending the production of a new life were the conditions that had so menacingly encompassed her own dissolved.

On a sunny day Walter stood before the mantel in his wife's room, peeling an orange for her, rejoicing that she was increasing in strength, and glorying in his first born.

And then, without being touched by hand or other object and as if by some invisible impulsions, a vase that stood on the mantel at Walter's back, fell forward



and was shattered on the tiling at his feet. Next day he was in the grip of the fever. In a few days came the black vomit and death.

The body could not be brought north at once, and it was arranged that it should lie in a small vault until the time should expire within which it could not be transported.

Beneath this dark shadow Bertha entered with other members of the family, and for a time it was almost forgotten that she had a private sorrow all her own.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE COMING OF THE DEAD.

THE circumstances surrounding Walter's death and the temporary disposition of his remains made the people of the Good Hope neighborhood feel that the body was a distinguished corpse.

For the pieces of that shattered vase had rattled even against Walter's heels, and how close he must have come to being touched by the very finger of God or of a demon! A sign, surely, whether of a power good or bad, had been wrought over him, while yet he lived, to mark him for the sudden and awful death that he died—a death which so contaminated his flesh that even the cold clay must be hurried out of sight lest it be the curse of those who might linger over and look upon it!

And Authority—that strangely fabricated engine of high civil potencies called Authority—had had reason to take hasty cognizance of this poor body, wrecked by the agencies of a power so malignant and mysterious. Authority had seized it, indeed, while yet it lay upon the bed and when the spirit had been even but a short time gone, and carried it away, with no time for mourning or for tears, to a little white, marble prison on the city's edge. It had had the special attention of officers. It had been dealt with

by the city of New Orleans and by the state of Louisiana. It had been made subject to laws and rules not often heard of near a quiet country cemetery.

Therefore the Good Hope people felt that it was no common corpse. Imagine all the natural causes they might for the falling of the vase—and nobody pretending to know the facts had ever said that a sudden puff of wind did not come in at an open window against the frail vessel or that Walter, in the exuberance of his spirits over his wife's recovery, did not lean back and tip it, unknown to himself or Ida, with his shoulder—imagine as they might, most of the people had the apprehension that some invisible hand pushed the vase from the mantel.

As the day now approached when this historic bit of mortality was to be released from its low-vaulted prison and make a silent journey northward to seek its final rest, the pride of the people around the Old Plantation in the fact that in their midst, in their own little graveyard, was to occur a burial about which so much might be said, began to struggle with their fear lest certain awful things might also be drawing near.

It was in their minds that in some way the corpse was a nomad. They had often imagined that that white tomb in the south was but a tent, and now its occupant was to issue forth, bound in grave-clothes, and come hitherward. And how singularly he was to travel! As if asleep, yet moving! Lying on his back with his hands folded across his breast, yet constantly

coming, coming! Always looking toward the sky, making no sign, and getting nearer and nearer every hour! A mute and distressed wanderer!

But this was not the worst. Minds were startled at the thought that about the mortuary box there might be a subtle, intangible odor which it would be death to inhale, or that from the open grave, as the mournful burden was lowered into the earth, an invisible essence might arise to poison the wholesome air with the infection of a plague!

For a whole month before the body arrived were told and retold frightful stories from anywhere of all manner of singular afflictions and terrible deaths. Every home became a hospital with a hundred imaginary patients. It was as if every lazar house in the world had been called on to contribute its most shocking picture for the temporary contemplation of the community.

To go the whole length of making much out of the alleged danger, to carry the scare to its last degree of consistency and so add something as nearly as possible like earnestness to a situation in which, after all, the common consciousness recognized there was a good deal of pretense, it began to be suggested that Abner Garrett, in bringing the body home for burial, was putting the lives of his neighbors in peril. It was hinted, too, as a kind of corollary, that if people had a due regard for their safety they would not go near the corpse.

Meantime the hearts in the Garrett home, which had



been fraught to crushing by the grievous intelligence flashed from the south in the early autumn, and which afterwards had lightened for a time, grew heavy again. Mr. Garrett's paleness, scarce gone, returned. He bore the look of some hopeless, weary one. To him the intervening time had been like one long vigil at the bedside of the sick.

His intellect knew that his son must be dead, but the bad news came from so far away, and he had not seen the closed eyes and waxen face of his boy; and his heart would have it most of the time, something like a half-consciousness, that Walter was half alive. Half alive, and so the fearful father watched, willing to live in a dream and unwilling to wake from it until Walter was borne home. That would be the real death day. Walter should die at home. The old man often went up to what was called the "boys' room," unused now and unfurnished, and sat there until chilled.

One morning, a week before the body came, Bertha found him there. She was startled at first when his white face was turned full upon her, for she had expected when she opened the door to see only the dreary emptiness of that now doubly cheerless place. Mr. Garrett smiled sadly as she entered, extended his arm and drew her into his lap.

"It used to be a cozy place before the boys left home," said he, "and I've had many a good time with them up here. Now Walter's coming home again, and we must fix it up for him just as it was then. He may not occupy the bed nor sit in one of the chairs nor look

dreamily into the fire as he used to do, but he'll see the room; he'll see it and he'll like it. He'll be glad to get back. He'll be glad," and Mr. Garrett's sad smile turned into one that was almost joyful.

As for Bertha, she laid her head upon his shoulder and sobbed.

At length she spoke, and said: "And yet, father, the people are talking. They say we ought not to bring him home."

"What's that, my child, what's that?" asked Mr. Garrett with a look of the utmost incredulity in his face.

"They say we ought not to bring him home because it's dangerous; that it may cause yellow fever up here or something else, because he died of such an awful thing."

"Do they criticize us for doing it, for bringing our own dear, dead son home so that he may lie near us and we may visit his grave?"

"Yes, they say we ought not to do it, at least for a year or two."

The old man's face at this moment was pitiful to see. It was like the room in which he sat, cold, dismantled, reflecting its suggestion of sorrow and of the hopeless finality of those events that separated the dismal present from the happier past. The clouds had become just a little thicker and it was raining just a little harder in the old man's heart. He stared at the small fireplace, the empty bed frame and the bare walls.

"Reproached by my neighbors," said he slowly and but half-audibly, "for bringing him home—a year or

two yet—they think I'm bound to do it even if it should spread a pestilence among them—how could they think that?—think me so selfish in my sorrow or in my affection as to put them to such a risk as that?

"Whom did you hear speak of it?" he asked, raising his voice.

"Henry said he had heard a good many talking about it," answered Bertha.

"Well, they must know it's perfectly safe," said Mr. Garrett in an assuring tone, but he himself was not assured that they did know, and he felt pained as with a dart at the imputation the vain gossip implied.

Then he spoke again about fitting up the room, and seemed presently to forget the distressing report that he had just heard, for his eyes brightened, pleasant smiles came once more and his voice showed a glad interest as he discussed with Bertha what it would be necessary to do to furnish the room just as nearly as possible as it was when years before it had been the headquarters of the boys, a favorite resort of their father's and a place, oh, so high up but always so interesting that it never failed to well repay the little tot Bertha for the pains and endeavor of her clambering pilgrimage.

And Bertha, too, grew animated and almost cheerful over the undertaking to rehabilitate this old and, since many years, lonely corner.

They determined to commence it that very day. They went down stairs. When they informed Mrs. Garrett of their plan she had the appearance of one

who is in the presence of strange beings. The moment the announcement was made she looked at her husband and at Bertha as if she were afraid of them, and indeed she was.

The very thought of acting as if Walter were alive, of preparing to receive him as if he were to come walking in the flesh, with buoyant step and beaming face, struck the poor woman as so unnatural that she could have been scarcely less dumbfounded and bewildered had she heard a voice from the tomb itself. Did they expect that those stiff and shrivelled arms would grow supple and embrace them? Or to hear a joyous salutation from that closed mouth or receive a kiss from those cold and wasted lips? To her the conceit was uncanny. No thought of insanity entered her head, but Mr. Garrett and Bertha seemed to her to have become the spell-bound messengers of the dead and to speak in the language of shadows.

She knew not what to answer them, for her simple mind was filled with alarm. She was overcome by the impression that the mysterious things of the world of darkness were boldly thrusting themselves into the world of substance and light, to confuse the dull senses of common nature. The suspicion came to her that Mr. Garrett, on his frequent visits to that upper, deserted chamber, might have strange communings with their dead son and that her husband's pallid face and cold extremities, on coming down, might have been due, not alone to the chilly air, but also to the frigid touch of some hidden hand.



"Why, mamma, what's the matter?" asked Bertha as Mrs. Garrett sank into a chair, still dazed and speechless.

"Oh, it seems so strange to do that," replied the troubled woman, somewhat withdrawn from her unearthly vagaries and conjectures by a question showing an interest so plainly human.

"But we want to do something that will seem to welcome him. We don't want to just sit and let him come."

This did not help the situation for Mrs. Garrett, but she feared to express dissent though feeling that an evil was brooding. So she said no more, and Mr. Garrett and Bertha proceeded with the task they had set for themselves. However, Mr. Garrett had observed that his wife regarded their work as portentous. To her the refurnished room, no matter how cheery and inviting and home-like they might make it, and perhaps all the more in the degree they made it so, would be filled with a cloud, and he began with uneasy misgivings.

But the forebodings which his wife's manner had forced into his heart vanished a few hours later when, standing before a radiant, crackling fire that his own hand had kindled, the mere fact that the dear old room was warm again was a solace to his spirit.

The refurnishing took two days. It lightened the melancholy of Mr. Garrett and Bertha, and the hoarse whistling of the steamboats as they passed up the river did not seem so mournful; but Mrs. Garrett could not become reconciled to the proceeding. There was a

boldness or impiety about it, a trifling with awful things, which she felt must sooner or later bring on a judgment. But she said nothing.

When the neighbors learned what had been going on they shared Mrs. Garrett's feelings. It was something they could not understand, and magnified in a welcome manner the general mystery with which the community was now engrossed.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### BITTEN BY THE SILVER SERPENT.

THE burial was on a Sunday afternoon in February. The people came for miles around. The more intimate acquaintances of the Garretts, comprising generally the most intelligent families in the vicinity, were moved by feelings in which the desire to express a kindly interest and sympathy was predominant over less worthy sentiments.

Others were actuated by curiosity, which, though commonly on such occasions it lacks positive virtue and is, indeed, likely to be morbid, could not be regarded in this instance, considering all that had been said, as very unnatural. And as curiosity is never less intrusive than at a funeral or where great grief is, these latter ones stood afar off. They grouped themselves out by the gate or looked over the shoulders of those in advance.

And those—a large number—in whom a curiosity, begotten by fear, was mingled with fear, and fear was the stronger, avoided the house and straggled of common accord to the graveyard where they inspected at their will the open grave that was soon to receive a charge so notable, and poked their toes into the pile of clay that presently was to hide the object which while unhidden was so menacing.

From here they would saunter on singly and in twos and threes up a gentle hill to the dingy little district schoolhouse, a hundred yards away, for the teacher had come down, unlocked the door and built a fire so that they might be warm while waiting.

Such a session of school had never been held in that room before. Such a motley company, big and little, black and white, male and female, and all how needing instruction! So, while over at the Plantation home, with strange horses gnawing irreverently at the fence boards, and the porches black with men and women who could not get inside, "Brother Charlie" was reading the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians and talking about New Orleans and New Je-rooz-alum, the more timid people in the schoolhouse were at class to one another.

A noisy school! No order was kept. Teachers were unceremoniously interrupted. A question asked of one would be answered by another or by a half dozen at once in as many different ways. There was whispering, talking aloud, changing of seats, going out and in doors, and, withal, the attention was constantly detracted by expectancy.

The subjects of instruction were many:

Why could yellow fever not be carried in cold as well as in warm weather?

Was not its prevalence in the south alone due simply to chance?

Why did Mr. Garrett furnish Walter's room as if he were coming home alive?



Could not the seeds of yellow fever produce other and quite as terrible diseases in cold climates?

The best thing for croup.

The latest "diptheory" epidemic.

The power of small potatoes to keep away rheumatism.

The horror hovering about a hearse.

Had there been cases of smallpox leaving the patient unmarked?

Could it possibly be true that Walter's wife escaped the yellow fever simply because she had been lately confined?

The virtues of assafoetida bags.

At length there was a hush, for a company of men and women, who had taken the short cut afoot from the house, were seen emerging from the wood and entering the graveyard. It was a column in black, for every wardrobe and clothes chest had been ransacked and the blackest garments in every house were worn that day.

The schoolhouse was at once deserted, and its late occupants moved down the hill and climbed over the fence into the sacred enclosure at the corner diagonally opposite to that in which the grave was dug.

The high, dead grass was surging to and fro desolately beneath the rude monuments there, and a flock of crows were cawing in a tree on the edge of the wood overlooking the scene when the funeral procession came up.

First, "Brother Charlie" in a carriage by the side of a

person never before seen in this country place, Cornelius Vail of Madison, undertaker and funeral director, who had buried ten thousand people, tall, pale and with white hair, as if he had grown to be like the White Horse the sound of whose hoofs he had followed so long and so closely—a sufficient curiosity in himself to the simple folks who regarded him.

Then, that dread, solemn, significant, black-plumed vehicle that always accompanied him, drawn by shining black horses, covered, as if their color were not enough, with black netting fringed with tiny black tassels. A man always looking into tearful eyes, talking cruel business to broken hearts, getting his orders out of mouths struck almost dumb—a vehicle always making a sad journey, carrying away someone's hope, leading sorrowing ones as with an iron chain to where the earth opens—those gulfs of despair—and the dear form is swallowed up to be seen no more.

Then, Abner Garrett, who had prepared to receive his son as if he were alive, supporting the young widow who had seen the vase fall at Walter's feet and on whom herself had been wrought something so like a miracle; Dan, the blonde hero of wave and rope and gangplank, by the side of his mother, the slave girl once, the white-black woman, a reader of signs; Old Maggie, of singular history, stooped, blind in one eye, hard of hearing; Bertha, a dew-drenched flower, disappointed in love, the unhappy belle of the region. And with the family came Professor Bland, mourning

with those who mourned, halt, misshapen, but with a face and head worthy of a royal form and stature. He had come down from College Hill to see his old pupil laid away and to attest his sympathy with his old friends.

All these were observed with an attentiveness and intensity that fell short of a stare only because the mournful circumstances imposed a sentiment of respect to which even the inquisitiveness and curiosity of the untutored and uncultivated minds of that multitude yielded.

"Shiftless Henry" was one of the pallbearers. It was a trying time for him. Mrs. Garrett had over him a dominion that no other human being possessed. He always worked for her better than for anyone else, though this is not saying a great deal. In the last eighteen or twenty months he had worked better than before—a fact Bertha had noticed and laughed at. He had, of course, heard the general talk in the neighborhood for the last month, but it had not frightened him. Mrs. Garrett, he knew, had no fear that Walter's corpse would bring contagion, and so he had none. But when he found out Mrs. Garrett was troubled about the refurnishing of Walter's room and the fact that Mr. Garrett slept in it with a blazing fire two nights before the body came he had creeping of the flesh. He struggled with himself. He did his best to think that there could be nothing wrong or non-human about it, because Bertha had a part in it, but he could not so ease his mind. Bertha was in

league with Mr. Garrett, and Henry imagined in the last few days that he could see a strange light in Mr. Garrett's eyes and that his voice was not natural.

He would not worry about the seeds of pestilence or the germs of disease, because, so far as he knew, Mrs. Garrett did not, but he could never bear to meditate on the subject of ghosts and had always been afraid of the dark.

And he could not keep away from the Garrett home now when the family was in bereavement and needed the kind offices of friends. As an old friend of the family, a near neighbor, a boyhood companion of Walter and Dan, a patient and plodding aspirant for Bertha's hand, he could not absent himself even if he had not already proffered any services that it was in his power to render.

But, as he came every day to inquire what he might do, he went about the house with fear and trembling. It was worse after he had assisted in bringing the corpse from the wharf, for he had been stricken as if with palsy when, in handling the box, a noise was heard on the inside. Going home in the evening, after having been asked to act as a pallbearer the coming Sunday, he fancied he could hear Walter calling him at a distance in the woods. He would have been glad to get a thousand miles away until it was all over, but, since he was in for it, he strove to put on it the best face possible.

He would journey to the postoffice and argue with as many of his acquaintances as he could engage in



conversation, whether they took the opposite side or not, that there could be no such thing as a ghost.

"It ith thith way," said he to the postmaster with emphatic deliberation, "ath far ath the body ith contherned, when a man ith dead he'th dead, and ath for hith thpirit, we are taught in the Bible that the thpirit of every man goeth to Heaven or to Hell, and wunth there, it thtayth."

This was supplemented by a reference to the Spiritualists, many of them men of the most acute sort, in Henry's opinion, who would be able, if any men were, to hold communication with departed souls; but all of them, he declared, had failed, and, as for spiritualistic seances, he was convinced that there never was one that was not a humbug. They might be puzzling for a time but were always finally "ekthploded."

Neither did he lose sight of the proposition that shadow cannot harm substance, which to state put his tongue to a most violent contortional exercise. With respect to spirits that never had bodies, with whom he had never had any sort of acquaintance, and they presumably none with him, who could not call him Henry and did not know where he lived, they did not disquiet him. He would have been glad to see or hear an angel, and the devil never but once seemed to be coming his way and that was years ago when for a few revival days his untried soul wrestled with the dogma of total depravity and groaned under a conviction of sin.

On the morning of the funeral day he dressed him-

self with unwonted care and with a scrupulous regard, so far as his lights could direct him, for the conventionalities and proprieties of the solemn occasion before him. He knew that black was the color. He began with his boots. Shoeblicking was a footgear cosmetic never known in the Anthony household. Henry had discovered a substitute which recommended itself to him because always on hand and more convenient for use than the commercial article. It was sometimes suggested to him by those occasionally present at his somewhat rare toilets that this blacking was not susceptible of so fine a polish as the "store stuff," but an answer perfectly satisfactory to himself was that "if a boot ith ath black ath a thtove it ith black enough."

So, on this morning he went as usual to the kitchen, inverted a kettle, and exercising alternately his maxillary glands and his brush, arrayed his coarse boots in a coat of black positive enough, in his view, for any sermon-hearing or any funeral—two things which he was like a great many other people in regarding as closely akin; differing mainly in this, that at a funeral an actual corpse of some known person is present, while at sermon a corpse is but imagined, and there is far less mourning, because the imagined corpse is that of some indefinite unfortunate whom somewhere, somehow, some time death overtook. Oh, how many funerals this stranger has had, and he is not yet buried!

But Henry, through sorrowful piety and reverence,

applied a double portion of sombre and solemn soot. His boot could not say to the kettle "Thou art black."

A couple of years before this Henry was present when Walter was discarding some old clothes. Walter held up a swallow-tail coat and surveyed it from top to bottom. It was a garment such as Henry had never beheld and he observed it with wonder.

"What d'ye call that?" he asked. "That mutht be a houthe that the carpenterth forgot to build the cornerth onto."

"That? Oh, that's what we call a claw hammer," answered Walter. "You may have it if you like," and he tossed the coat to Henry.

"That mutht be thome new thtyle that you ketched at your college. Do they wear them thingth up there?"

"Well, once in a while. That'll do for you when you go to some big party or wedding—or funeral," said Walter with a disposition to joke which Henry did not perceive.

"All right, thir, thankth. I'll wear it and remember you."

So Henry put it on, this day that he was to help carry Walter to his grave, and it must be confessed that, though sincere sorrow and mourning were in his heart, a little vanity and pride found their way in, too, and Mrs. Anthony, as she gazed upon the queerly fashioned garment hanging from the shoulders of her son, was surprised at the air of gentility and grace that it imparted to the form and figure

of her lank, loose-jointed, bony and awkward Henry.

Henry was conscious of this pride in himself and, feeling it a sin, strove, with but a moment's success, to drive it away with the following reflection:

"Little did he think, I reckon, that it wath goin' to be to hith own funeral that I would wear it firtht."

"No, no," sighed his mother, "we can never tell what's goin' to happen. It may be one of ours turn next."

After which moralizing the pride returned. Henry would not wear his overcoat on the pretext that it was too shabby, but perhaps he left it off only because he was unwilling that the solemn glory of his new habiliment should be hidden by gross and common fabric.

It was a cut of cloth with which the community, also, was not familiar. A few, indeed, understood the functions of this style of coat, but a funeral is not an occasion when one stops to be critical and they regarded its appearance only as an extreme informality among the innumerable informalities of commoner brood that thrive in country districts. Others had now and then seen preachers thus arrayed at meetings of Baptist associations, and were therefore struck with no suspicion of particular impropriety, since if a preacher might wear such a coat at an Association a layman might wear one at a funeral. But to all the rest this coat was something wholly new and broke upon their vision as a veritable revelation, an unheard-of phenomenon.





“Stand aside! Others will do your work.”



The people felt that under it Henry's character was changed, that it had un-Henried or trans-Henried him. Part of the Henry, anyway, was somehow gone from him or had been submerged or overwhelmed by the garb that was upon him.

Once they felt that the coat was in the nature of a robe. Again, they would scarcely have been surprised if Henry had spread the scant, black skirts, leaped from the earth and flown awkwardly away.

This impression of Henry's strangeness had been deepened by his manner. His face was pale, his hands shook and his legs quaked. His excitement increased, the nearer the grave was approached, and as the bier was taken up at the graveyard gate and the burden borne forward, his trembling became so violent and his weakness so great that half the time he leaned heavily against the box and became himself a burden as well.

As the solemn procession moved on, some of those who had held off followed at some distance, but the most timid ones still remained in the place they had first taken and a few believed themselves safer outside the enclosure altogether.

Reaching the grave, Abner Garrett, Bertha and Henry were equally surprised to find Gassler awaiting the cortege there, for it was he who had been engaged by some of the friends of the family, without consulting Mr. Garrett in this particular, to dig the grave and act as sexton. Garrett and Bertha were both surprised and shocked, the former because he felt that

Gassler had meddled cruelly in the affairs of his family, and Bertha because she looked upon him as the wretch that by fiendish lying had robbed her of her lover. Her indignation now consumed even her sorrow. The box had been placed over the grave, "Brother Charlie" had offered a prayer. Bertha turned to Gassler and said:

"Please stand aside."

"What do you mean?" he asked, surprised.

"Stand aside. Others will do your work," she said in a louder voice and in the undoubted tone of command.

At the same time she stepped toward him. He stepped back, but as he did so his foot struck one end of the board supporting the foot of the box. The earth beneath began to crumble and fall into the grave, and the box to sink. Gassler stooped quickly to support it with his hand. Bertha caught sight on one finger of a silver ring in the semblance of a coiled serpent. Then the geography of the whole hand, quick as a flash of lightning, became outlined in her sight with the distinctness of a map.

She had shrunk back in terror from the same shining serpent and that same uncouth hand, seen in the glare of the lamplight on the porch fourteen years before. She was now equally unnerved and overcome by the sight. As her eye fell upon it her pale face grew still paler. She gave a shrill scream and sprang to grasp Mr. Garrett's arm. Gassler had caught the box just in time to keep it from going down, but the board fell into the grave.



Not all had heard just what Bertha had said to Gassler, but they had observed her anger, Gassler's stepping back and quick stooping, the dull, hollow sound that came from the grave when the board struck the hard bottom, Bertha's piercing cry and bound, and all were seized with consternation and fright. It was in every mind that the dread truth, whatever it might be, in all the gossip, all the conjectures and all the fears that had filled the air for a month had come out sure enough in some awful unearthly climax.

The little graveyard became like a madhouse. Bertha's scream was immediately echoed by a score of screams in different parts of the cemetery. A portion of the people, though cold with fear, rushed to the grave and surged about it, not stopping in their frenzied impetuosity to pollute with their feet the sacred pile of fresh earth, upon which, ankle deep in the loose clay, they pressed against one another for position. Others turned and fled in panic.

Men, women and children were scrambling over the fences. A score of colored people of both sexes rushed from the yard, shrieking, imagining that the very tombstones had forsaken the holy mounds over which through long days and nights they had kept silent sentry and were in pursuit of them.

Gassler, angered at Bertha's command, was, through the stupefaction of the men about him, left so long alone in his cramped position, supporting the heavy box, though it was but a moment, that he was still

furthered angered, and, beside himself with rage, he ordered them with an oath to take hold of the straps and lower the box into the grave.

Hearing the profane words, Prof. Bland with an inarticulate exclamation of horror raised his eyes toward heaven. Mrs. Garrett sank down on Julia's grave, moaning and wringing her hands. Dan was by her side seeking to compose her. Henry was seized by his old mother who was endeavoring to drag him away. Old Maggie was running distractedly from one to another, saying words no one could understand and to which, indeed, no one listened. Abner Garrett had Bertha folded in his arms, patting her on the back and saying such things as a mother might say to a frightened child.

Hearing Gassler's oath, the frenzied girl cried:

"The robber! The robber! The robber! Look at his hand!"

People thought at first that she had lost her reason, but Garrett, just as the first faint apprehension of her meaning was beginning to be caught, staggered, pale and desperate, toward Gassler with the command:

"Show us your left hand."

And now there were some who fully understood the significance of Bertha's actions and words.

"Show us your left hand," repeated Garrett as Gassler drew back and hesitated. Then, with defiant impatience the man shot forth his hand.

There was the serpent of silver coiled around the third finger, and from the base of the finger a scar ran

up the palm to a depression in the ball of the thumb.

Sure enough, and some remarked it was strange they had never noticed it, though, indeed, the slight fame about this mark in the days following the robbery had remained but a short time in the common recollection.

"You must be the man," said Garrett with firmness but with no indication of a personal resentment.

A murmur of astonishment ran through the crowd, and all eyes were upon Gassler. Garrett looked around at his wife and the family group, and, turning again to Gassler, he said with a patriarchal authority as he pointed into the grave:

"You shall not throw one clod of dirt upon that coffin."

"You tried to kill papa! You robbed us! You have been a curse to us all! You dare to bury our brother! He ought to have hanged you!" cried Bertha.

Gassler's face was as red as fire.

"*Your* papa," he yelled; "*your* brother, eh? I guess it's time you knowed who your papa is. I'm your papa, and there," pointing to Old Maggie, whose mouth was wide open with apprehension and wonder, "there's your mammy. That may take some o' the fine feathers off ye. You've got too many of 'em."

Bertha had naught to reply. She could not have spoken had she tried, for the memory of a childish teasing, long forgotten, now returned and overwhelmed her. Nor would she have spoken if she could. Gass-

ler's was the taunt of an angry man, but it had not seemed merely a madly-aimed, insulting jest, and Bertha stood mute and motionless, dreading in anywise to provoke a look, a sign, a breath of confirmation that would dash away the slight hope still left to her, in spite of the memory and Gassler's manner, that the words might be untrue. Oh, she could bear that teasing again, for if that were the same truth it seemed so little a one; but now, coming on a torrent of anger, it was full grown, savage and a monster. If she could resist it even by turning into a statue of stone she would wish to do that.

The silence of all, which endured for several moments, was a mercy to her. At length Abner Garrett turned around, saying:

"Let us go. Neighbors, some of you will please see that the grave is filled."

He and Bertha taking the lead, the company of mourners went to the gate. There all except these two took the carriages, for the planter had assented to Bertha's suggestion that he and she walk home together through the woods.



## CHAPTER XX.

### AN ORPHAN.

THE rugged old beeches along the oft-trodden way which Garrett and Bertha now walked, close together, and, for a little distance, in silence, extended, so it seemed to them, a something like sympathy to their troubled spirits, and Garrett here and there, as he passed, actually caught the end of a low-swinging branch as if it were the hand of a plain and faithful friend.

Bertha was in agony with a doubt that was making a whirlwind in her soul, and the man with a truth which, while it remained a secret from the girl, had, indeed, sometimes tortured him, but which now, he felt, must rend him as it passed from him.

"Father," cried the girl as she threw back the black veil that hung before her face and, turning about, caught Mr. Garrett convulsively by the arm—"Father, is it so?"

Garrett did not fail to notice that it was the first or second time in her life that, in addressing him, she had used the word Father, nor that she repeated it and dwelt upon it as if pleading that he should call her his own. The appeal made him doubly tender toward her, if that were possible, for it was infinitely pitiful; and doubly miserable, if that, too, were pos-

sible, that he could not give her the answer for which her heart yearned.

"Daughter—daughter—daughter," he almost sobbed as he threw his arms about her and looked down into her face (and he could see already tears of joy welling in her eyes); "daughter you have been since before you can remember; daughter you shall always be, but"—and the old man scarcely knew his own voice as he said it—"have not always been."

Perplexity and distress returned to Bertha's face.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Is it so, then?"

"We are not your real flesh and blood parents. It is true that Maggie is your mother. I suppose Gassler is your father. But it shall make no difference, Bertha. You are our daughter by adoption; ours by love and care. You have always been our darling just the same as if you had been really our own child. We have always loved you as we loved Julia. It can't make any difference, can it, dear?"

Bertha was already sobbing, and her tears were those of the orphan, for the voice of Abner Garrett even now sounded like that of another and his words simply as the consolation of some kind stranger. She felt that he had at last forsaken her in a woeful extremity and had taken the cruel part of the detested Gassler against her.

"Oh, father," she said—for she clung to that name—"it makes me feel so lonely. I feel as if you all were dead, you and mamma and Dan, buried today in the

same grave with Walter, and Gassler standing over it, and I left without any parents or home at all."

"Bertha, we are just as much your parents as if you had been born to us," replied the old man stoutly. "We have always treated you as if you were our own child, and we always shall. You cannot remember when it was otherwise, so let it make no difference, for, anyway, it could be only a fancied difference. Your home is with us. Our love and care are with you." The girl smiled sadly.

"I shall never leave you," she said, "but I cannot bear the thought that Gassler is my father and Old Maggie my mother. It degrades me. It makes me ashamed and will torment me every day of my life. I can never lift up my head again—have other people known it?"

"They have known Maggie was your mother—that is, the most of them—but not that Gassler was your father, so far as I know, until this day. Gassler must be an assumed name. His name must be Crowell—Maggie's name."

"But it is so strange. How did it happen? Why have they not lived together? Was I not born in the house?"

"They were married in Kentucky just before the war. He soon deserted her and joined the Confederate army, leaving her entirely destitute and alone without relatives or friends.—As your birth approached she became a public charge. A few weeks after you were born I brought you and Maggie here

where you have ever since been. I knew nothing about Gassler until he came to the neighborhood, for what purpose I don't know, two or three years ago, though we find today that he was one of the men who robbed us. You were still a baby when we grew so fond of you that we told Maggie that, if she were willing, we would adopt you and treat you as our own child. She consented, but said she wanted you to grow up considering us as your parents. At the same time we told her that she need never leave you, but that we wanted her to remain in our household."

"And so I must think of Old Maggie as my mother!" and the tears came again.

"But, Bertha, think what the good soul has done for you. Given you up, priceless treasure that you are, all her life long. Proud of you as any mother ever was of a child—so proud of you that, being ashamed of her own simplicity, her physical defects and her indifferent extraction, she has been pleased—though with many a real mother's sorrowful moment, no doubt—to have you pass for our daughter and to have you think of yourself as our daughter, imagining that we were more respectable and more highly considered than she could ever be. Coupled with that, she wanted to make sure that, whatever became of herself, as she said, you would have a home where you would be loved and be in comfort."

"Poor Old Maggie!" said Bertha in a tone of compassion, "but I can't bear to think of her as my mother—where was she living when I was born?"



"She was in a poorhouse managed by a relative of mine, but it was not her fault. Many worthy people find themselves forced there."

The girl flushed and paled by turns.

"Poorhouse! Oh, it is all so strange, so strange!" she murmured, "I can't believe it. I'm only dreaming it."

"And I often reproached myself," continued Mr. Garrett, "for at first consenting to Maggie's request and then continuing to carry it out, until the time came when I felt I could not give you up as mine, and could not have you know the truth. I felt that my wife and I were stealing you from Maggie, kidnapping you from her, taking advantage of her poor state, and I have doubly reproached myself and felt a sense of guilt on those occasions when Maggie seemed particularly tender toward you, and proud of you, and I could see she was yearning to have you call her mamma. But she never once spoke about these things."

"But why have you never told me before? You could have told just me."

"To save you what you suffer now, my darling, and, as I told you a moment ago, I was so selfish I could not give you up. When Julia died"—and the poor old man's lips quivered and his voice was tremulous—"when Julia died we had no longer a daughter. You seemed sent to take her place—you looked much like her, and you were so sweet a child, so affectionate, so fond of us."

And here the old man and the girl wept together.

"Gassler my father?" murmured Bertha. "What will you do with Gassler, papa?"

"I would not, if I could, harm a hair of his head."

"But why? He robbed us. He struck you. He has lied about me, and he swore at Walter's grave."

"Yes, he is a hard man, but had it not been for him I would never have seen you."

Bertha answered nothing. They were still face to face with their arms around each other, heedless of the chilling wind that blew through the wood, half forgetful of where they were, looking around to see only that they were alone.

"I don't want to let go of you," said Bertha, "for I feel that we are taking leave of each other." The words were hurried out of her throat by a lump that was just behind them. "I feel that I am losing you and you are losing me. I fear that you will not seem the same to me, and that I shall myself be some other person."

"No, no, my dear," said Mr. Garrett with gentle deprecation. "But, Bertha, have you thought that this may be all for the best? Have you thought of Pressley?"

The girl's face must have looked like the faces of those who after anxious search have at last found what was long lost, or of those who in the morning have found peace after a night of turmoil. Mr. Garrett could see that a new and mighty hope was in her breast.

"Bertha, I felt it cruel not to tell you then," said he, meaning a time that she understood perfectly

well, "but I was so selfish I could not give you up, and then, my wife, your mother, it would have so hurt her to tell you under those circumstances. And I could not give you up in a more literal sense. I could not bear to think of your marrying and going away from us. So all your suffering has been for us, has been my fault"—

"No, no, father," said Bertha, for his pains of repentance pained her. But he was determined to confess himself to the child whom, through his too selfish fondness, he had caused to suffer, and from whom, now become his priestess, he would ask forgiveness.

"Yes, it has been my fault," he said with a frank insistence and a self-condemnation which he would not hold back from inflicting with all due rigor as a penance. "Every night for months I have made up my mind to tell you in the morning, but when the morning came, somehow I would not or could not speak the words, even though your sorrow distressed me."

And then, so prone is even the most contrite soul to seek excuses for itself, he added:

"And I might have told you had it not occurred to me that possibly it would be useless, as Pressley might be no better satisfied with your new parents, considering their standing, than with the old. But now let him know everything, and, since you love him, I hope he will come back to you.—We must go on. I'm chilled through."

But Bertha's new hope was like a dream and it

passed like a dream. It was gone when they reached the other side of the wood, for Bertha had begun to suspect that Jim might think she had become purged of one kind of dross only by the revelation of another equally intolerable; and the dear old house and the almost as dear big playhouse of a barn had come into view. There was a strangeness about the familiar premises now. There was not the old look of welcome from the windows. The big, ornamentally-capped gate posts, several pairs of them, seemed like foreign sentry captains that had thrown their lines about the place. She had something like a fear that as she passed near them they would challenge her as an intruder.

This impression and a kindred feeling of loneliness made her as miserable as ever, and she was impatient to be once more in the shelter and privacy of her own room, for there, at any rate, some things were her own and would beam forth a gladness at her coming.

As the two drew near the house Bertha hastened in such a measure as to surprise Garrett, who found it hard to keep pace with her. He looked at her and could see from her face that some change in the direction of her thoughts had renewed her agitation.

"But perhaps it is only because she is cold," thought he.

The others had already returned and were gathered about the fire in the sitting room, absorbed in their reflection on the melancholy and startling occurrences of the afternoon, and saying only those commonplace things that are more than ever commonplace when



minds have been so wrought on that tongues are not yet trusted to speak.

Old Maggie was ill at ease with only such knowledge of what had happened as her imperfect senses had allowed her to get, and her mind was toiling hard and fast to guess what were the words at the grave that attended the actions which she had observed, for she had not again asked to be informed. She presumed she understood the significance of Gassler's showing his hand, but he had afterward pointed to her in excited declamation, and as to what this meant she had been left to her own unaided and anxious conjectures.

She opened the door when Garrett and Bertha stepped on the porch. At a glance Bertha scanned the faces of those within. It was not sympathy or pity that she saw, though these were not wholly lacking, but it seemed to her that even the members of the family, Dan and Ida and Mrs. Garrett herself, were looking at her with curiosity and expectation. They all appeared to be asking the question: "How is she going to take it?" and to be looking for some sign as to what had passed between her and Abner Garrett on the way from the graveyard. She found herself, so it seemed to her, merely some object of wonder, some rare and unique person in a class by herself, and she doubly felt her loneliness.

She had not up to this time turned her eyes upon Maggie. She now looked at her with a frown, as if she had suffered an injury from her, and then speaking not a word, she opened the door to the stairway and

went up to her own room. She had expected to find it cold, but a fire crackled on the hearth, that Old Maggie's thoughtfulness had suggested and her hands had kindled. Bertha knew it and reflected upon it, but the operation only further confused her feelings. She threw herself on the bed in a bewilderment and anguish too intense for tears.

Down stairs Old Maggie stood motionless for several moments after the door closed behind Bertha, in a state of mind little short of stupefaction.

"I have told the poor girl all about herself," said Garrett sadly to the company. "She feels bad about it. You can imagine how strange it must be to her. Probably it ought to have been done long ago, but it is done now because it had to be done, and we must hope it is for the best."

Old Maggie could not catch what was said. She passed through the room straightway with a most pitiful expression in her face and sought her wonted place on a plain chair by the kitchen window. Her devoted soul was filled with an indescribable sense of disaster and loss.

It was but a few minutes until she recrossed the sitting room, carrying a few sticks of wood. The wood may have been but an excuse. Perhaps her only object was to confirm a sudden hope that she had mistaken Bertha's manner or, if not, to get, if possible, from her darling daughter a kinder look. Garrett could not force himself to bid her wait. She climbed the stairs and tapped on the door.

Bertha opened it. Maggie made a motion as if to bear her burden in, but Bertha took the sticks she carried at the threshold and seemed to expect her immediate retirement.

Maggie came down, and with tears in her eyes again passed out.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### AWAY FROM HOME.

I AM sure that if H. Kirk White had been authoritatively informed that Prof. Bland would be the only person ever in all the world to sing his hymn, "The Star of Bethlehem," but had been told also just how the professor would sing it, he would still be content to have composed it and rate it the product of a gracious inspiration.

Let the hymn here enter fully into our story, as it was sure to do sooner or later after the advent of Prof. Bland, and the close companions, already too long separated, be united again:

When, marshalled on the nightly plain  
The glittering hosts bestud the sky,  
One star alone of all the train  
Can fix the sinner's wandering eye.

Hark! hark! to God the chorus breaks  
From every host, from every gem,  
But one alone the Savior speaks—  
It is the Star of Bethlehem.

Once on the raging seas I rode.  
The storm was loud, the night was dark.  
The ocean yawned, and rudely blowed  
The wind that tossed my foundering bark



Deep horror then my vitals froze.

Death-struck, I ceased the tide to stem;

When suddenly a star arose—

It was the Star of Bethlehem.

It was my guide, my light, my all;

It bade my dark forebodings cease;

And through the storm and danger's thrall

It led me to the port of peace.

Now safely moored—my perils o'er,

I'll sing first in night's diadem

Forever and forevermore.

The Star—the Star of Bethlehem.

This hymn was a favorite with Prof. Bland, and whenever he sang it or joined others in singing it, as he often did at Sunday school or prayer meeting, his whole soul came out in the song. As one listened to his voice and watched the varying expressions of his countenance with his noble and scholarly face upturned, the words, as they were uttered, unrolled to the mental eye a sublime and terrible picture wonderfully vivid. One could see the marshalling of the glittering hosts, the sinner's wandering eye, the frightful storm, the awful peril, the agony of the lone navigator in the wrath of the deep, the beam of the saving star, and the secure port from which arose the grateful song of deliverance. All the peril, the despair and the escape were there, a graphic, orthodox description of man's lost state and only hope of salvation.

And to the mind of no listener, probably, was the picture thus drawn more distinct and real than to that of Gassler.

On this robust, unlettered, impulsive, quick-tempered man, the maimed, the reserved, the studious, the venerable, the poetry-quoting, the devotional schoolmaster had made a profound impression. The ardent temperament of the cobbler warmed into a glow at sight or thought of his benign friend, the professor. He often looked out of his shop window with pity on the crippled savant as the latter went hobbling by on the gravelly street, and considered himself highly honored, and was good enough to feel even ennobled whenever the professor shambled up the steep, narrow, short flight of steps and sat down in the shop for a little chat and to observe the shoemaker at his craft.

Gassler used to eye the physical peculiarities of Prof. Bland as closely as he dared. The shrunk and poorly controlled leg and foot seemed to him the most curious of all blighted things, and he was put in a kind of awe of the professor by the suspicion that for bodily imperfection he had been compensated by a kind Providence with an inner nature that surpassed the merely human and had something of the celestial about it.

The fact that the professor habitually wore light shoes with elastic tops, commonly called gaiters, was a detail not without its effect in the aggregate of circumstances that determined Gassler's estimate of him. He would have thought it a sign of effeminacy in any other man to wear gaiters, and so he did, indeed, in the case of Prof. Bland, yet in this instance an effeminacy not implying an inherent weakness, but

softening and gracing a masculine character with some of the finer feminine attributes by virtue of a stern and chastening infirmity.

Once Gassler was given the gaiters to mend. In the work of repair he lost time by musing over them. He handled them much as he might the wings from off the heels of Mercury, or the sandals of Gabriel. He turned them over and over. He peered into them and explored the toe with a finger where the eye could not reach. Finer, he observed, than the coarse boots and shoes usually dropped at his bench by men. Singular footgear of a singular man. He dallied with them. He delayed, and when the professor called for them they were not done. Finally he cut, sewed and patched as gently as if they were the very skin on their owner's feet, reluctantly relinquished them and charged nothing.

When on a summer Sabbath morning Prof. Bland would come up the aisle of the chapel, lifting himself along on crutch and cane and with a rose in his mouth, Gassler felt that this afflicted man was close akin to all the finer things in the universe. He never had such a sense of his own meanness as when the professor was near, and when the latter sang "The Star of Bethlehem" the rough shoemaker inwardly groaned and prayed that his feet might be set upon a solid rock, and that he might constantly live the noble life that he felt aroused in him at moments. For there were chords in his heart responsive to the touch of angel hands.

Raised on a small tobacco plantation, without schooling, he was scarcely more than a boy when he married, rather under an impulse of generosity than for affection, a friendless girl at domestic service. They were not happy together and when, soon afterward, the war broke out, he was glad to leave his poorly furnished and uncongenial home and join the Lexington Rifles raised by John H. Morgan, with whose fortunes his own were identified until he saw his admired and beloved chief shot down by Federal cavalry at a Tennessee farmhouse. At the close of the war he became a Jack-of-all-trades in Louisville, and one of those old soldiers who after the long riot of guerrilla warfare found it hard to accustom themselves to the restraints and the tame activities of a regime of peace.

He fell in with a few of his old comrades in arms, and, lamenting the end to their period of adventures, as well as smarting under the larger defeat, they resolved to compensate themselves by "touching up some men over the line" who had escaped loss or indignity on the occasion of the Morgan raid into Indiana and Ohio. As they put it, they would "continue the war a little," and, indeed, this euphemistic phrasing did to a trifling extent mitigate to the consciences of some of them their projected robberies.

In camp one night three years before, not a dozen miles from the Old Plantation, Gassler had heard something about the life and the wealth of Abner Garrett, and this he now recalled, proposing, since it was not



far away, that the new raiders call first at the home of this man who had married "one of his niggers and turned his back on the South." The suggestion was adopted, but the execution of the plan put Gassler entirely out of conceit with the whole series of enterprises of which it was to have been the inauguration.

Gassler was greatly surprised to find his deserted wife on the Garrett porch. He had heard that after his going away to the army she had become a public charge, had given birth to a daughter in the poorhouse and had soon afterward, taking her child with her, entered upon domestic service again in a wealthy family, but what family or where his informants did not know, and, indeed, at that time he cared little.

He beheld with admiration, too, and not without a sudden swelling of paternal affection, of course new and strange to him, the beautiful little girl by Maggie's side, for his first inference was that she was his own child, based on the fact that she was evidently in Maggie's loving care, of the age Maggie's child should be, and on a resemblance to himself which he fancied he saw in her face as he caught its features in the twilight.

When, however, on taking fright at him, the little cherub ran to Garrett and clutched his arm, Gassler became doubtful, for at a time like this surely the actions of a fearful child would indicate its natural protector. Where, then, was Maggie's child? Already put to bed? Or dead? At which latter thought Gassler felt a strange sorrow within him. Yet his first

impression prevailed, and he felt, all the time he was superintending the atrocious business at the Garrett home, that he was outraging the benefactor of his wife and child.

The knowledge that he was a father had never before this affected him deeply. He had thought of the unseen babe simply as something connected with Maggie, a consequence, indeed, of his association with her, but a kind of accidental inheritance falling to her by nature, and under all the circumstances essentially one of her own affairs.

Here now on the porch, with a family in terror under his revolver, and desperate accomplices looting the house—at this incongruous and extraordinary moment something like an ordinary and normal sense of fatherhood for the first time charged his soul with novel and dignifying emotions.

What the common father feels in the first hour of his promotion to parentage he was now, in large part, feeling. Here in this most unexpected and unpropitious time and place the pride of paternity had but just come to him. It was of a quality sufficiently fine to bring with it self-reproach and repentance on account of desertion, neglect and indifference, for the heart, steeled to commit a felony, suddenly softened and expanded, and in opening wide enough to receive the child, gave admittance to the mother also.

Hence he stretched forth his hand to caress his babe, but she shrank from him. He felt a momentary impulse to call off his companions, announce himself,

and on his knees beg forgiveness and mercy, but he had been schooled in four years of small-body warfare to be faithful to comrades unto the end in desperate undertakings, and he feared an accusation of disloyalty which even these unforeseen and unprecedented circumstances could not adequately extenuate. Besides, he realized that in the essentials of this adventure he was without authority to compromise his fellows. And so he failed them not.

When, safely escaped and the money counted, the other men congratulated themselves on the success of the first of the new raids and anticipated the profits of those that were to follow, Gassler stated point-blank that he was done with this kind of work, that it did not suit his fancy, but he gave to his friends no hint of the discovery he had made at the Old Plantation.

The money was equally divided. Gassler intended to return his share at once, but on the morrow his capricious conscience was not pricking him so keenly. It was not a robbery in the common meaning of the word. It was but a kind of retaliation. For four years of hard and unrequited endeavor in an unsuccessful cause it was proper enough that he should recoup himself, if somewhat irregularly and out of time, at the expense of those who had been on the enemy's side and who had not in their persons or property felt the struggle.

Not long afterward Gassler went west, where for several years he knocked about. He was a common

laborer on the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad. He took up a homestead in Kansas, but abandoned it after the second grasshopper season, and joined in the gold rush to the Black Hills. He was unsuccessful in the quest for metal wealth, but in a community where prices were high he made good income as a cobbler, the greater part of which he saved by the economy of boarding himself and avoiding the gaming tables.

He found much in the free, unconventional life of the frontier and the gold camp congenial to his nature, but, though he had no particular home in Kentucky, he often longed to be back on his native soil.

Recollections, too, of the pretty little flax-haired girl whom he had seen at an hour evil in all else were frequently in his mind. He imagined her growing bigger, still as sweet and pretty as ever, and he pictured a plain and reasonably comfortable home somewhere with her in it to delight him, and in which Maggie also would be treated with consideration. He would drop his rough ways, and all three of them would be very happy.

Pursuing this vision, and sick for this home in his fancy as well as for home in a wider sense, he returned to Kentucky. He determined to have an interview with Maggie without delay. His prudence dictated that it should be clandestine. Going to the neighborhood of the Old Plantation, he chose the church hour of a "service day" Sunday as being the most likely time at which he could see Maggie alone.



He watched the house and noticed that as the time for services approached, all of the family, apparently, save Maggie, left home for the church. He then called at the house, rapping at the rear door, and Maggie met him there.

Amazement seized the woman when she found herself face to face with the recreant husband she had not seen for long and had expected never to see again. She was not a little alarmed lest his appearance portended a change in the fortunes of herself and daughter.

Noting her excitement, he told her quickly that he had not come to harm her and wanted only to ask some questions, at which assurance she became calm, and listened to his further words with the greatest interest.

He asked if the girl in the family was her daughter, and on being answered he proceeded to tell Maggie at length about his love for their child, his new affection for herself (though Gassler was not quite candid on this point), and, begging her forgiveness for past conduct, he presented his proposition of a reunion.

Old Maggie then explained to him fully the status of herself and their daughter in the household, and, though without comprehension of the obstacle to Gassler's plan which lay in the fact of Bertha's adoption, she unhesitatingly expressed her opposition to his desire. She herself was perfectly content as things were, she said, and as for Bertha, the girl now passed for the daughter of somebody worth while and would some day share in the inheritance of a rich estate.

She also acquainted Gassler with the fact that the girl supposed Mr. and Mrs. Garrett to be her real father and mother.

Gassler told Maggie that he might frequently be in the neighborhood so that occasionally he might get so much as a sight of his daughter, and that he would go under the assumed name of Gassler, and secured from her a promise that she would never disclose his identity or intimate that she had ever known him or seen him. He was then about to go when Maggie asked:

"Were you ever at the house before?"

"No," he replied. "What makes ye ask that?"

"I wasn't sure but that you were here with several other men one evening a good many years ago," said Maggie. "I couldn't see their faces, but one of 'em had a voice that sounded like yours when he talked loud, and the others called him by a name that sounded like Zach."

"'T wa'n't me. What was the men doin'?"

"They were robbers."

"Now, Maggie," said Gassler pleadingly, "I have done a good many mean things, but you wouldn't think I'd been as bad as that, would ye?"

"Well, I didn't know," she said.

Gassler reminded her of the promise she had just given, and hurried away, going directly to the church. He entered, took a seat near the door, and then with his eyes searched the forward part of the room for Bertha.

He, of course, could get a view only of the back of her head until the service was over, when, as she was coming down the aisle, he kept his eyes intently fixed upon her. She noticed his persistent gaze which was not diverted even when her eyes squarely met his and she thought there was something brazen and impudent in his stare. He fell in immediately behind her and followed her out of the church where he continued to observe her until she and Mr. and Mrs. Garrett got into their surrey and drove away. He then mounted his horse and began his journey back to the little town on the Kentucky side of the river where he had opened a shoemaker's shop.

Gassler now recognized that it would be impossible to realize the ambition that for years had been growing in his heart. The daughter whom he would like to claim was in law the daughter of another man who, it was plain to see, loved her as his own, and Maggie, poor soul, who had redeemed herself in her faithless husband's eyes by becoming the mother of a pretty daughter and whom he would now shelter, provide for and respect for the daughter's sake—she had for a dozen years and more suspected him of felonious outrage on the man who had befriended his destitute wife and babe. Gassler owned to himself that he had forfeited all the rights of a husband and father, and though he might lament the circumstances that forbade him now to assert them, he was not at all disposed to question that the verdict of the years was just.

With the passing of time Gassler's crime had lain

heavier and heavier on his conscience. He had not successfully tricked his moral sense by calling it a "continuation of the war" or a belated, but still legitimate, reprisal. He had perceived distinctly enough the hour when social convention and civil law resumed their sway after the disorder and lawlessness of war. He had not been constituted by nature to be a doer of the darker iniquities. His vices, for the most part, lay well on the surface, such as profanity and intemperance. Fixed in his heart was a love for his fellows and reverence for the Deity. Indeed, he was peculiarly susceptible to religious influences and might have lived a notably pious and exemplary life but for his unsteadiness of will, his impulsiveness and quick temper. He was a backslider of oft-repeated experience. He got so he dreaded to go, yet was irresistibly attracted, to convenient campmeeting or revival. He was sure to be one of the first fruits of earnest exhortation, and then, the special influence withdrawn, came as regularly the "fall from grace." In his earlier years his confessions were always fairly complete and sincere, but later there was one big, unmanageable sin on which he was determined to keep a cloak. This was the Garrett robbery. He would argue with it and seek to make it own itself less ugly, but every time it insisted it was hideous and an abhorrence to his conscience.

For this reason Gassler's successive reconversions in later years had not been so satisfactory as formerly. With this burden, which he could not throw off, his advance was irresolute and shorter and his retreat was



quicker. This finally caused him sometimes to successfully avoid exposing himself to the fervor of evangelistic eloquence even when it was near at hand. He expected all the time to make headway against this memory and force the deed into the catalogue of his mere indiscretions or, at worst, his misdemeanors, but he found that he could not thus mitigate it, and that on the contrary, as all the circumstances of that evening were over and over again recollected, the wrong he had done grew in enormity.

Gassler was startled when he heard bluntly from Maggie's own lips that all these years she had suspected him. He wished he had asked her if she had ever expressed her suspicion to anybody. He feared she had. When he went west he could not belie to himself a frequently recurring feeling that he was going as a fugitive from justice, and when he returned he knew that he was not without a notion that he was running some risk of being finally detected. He understood well enough that the limitation of prosecution had been passed but this did not decrease his dread lest one day he should be loaded with popular odium as one of the participants in the crime.

When he recognized Maggie on Mr. Garrett's porch, though he knew her partial deafness was to his advantage, yet he took the precaution of attempting to disguise his voice, and, with this and the mask and a growth of beard, he was confident that when he left she was none the wiser as to his identity than when he came.

His discovery now of what was in her mind on this point alarmed him, and impelled him to refrain from taking up his trade in the vicinity of the Old Plantation, as he would have liked to do so as to have at least a stranger's observation of, or perchance a neighbor's acquaintance with, his daughter. He feared to go nearer. Therefore he resolved to settle down for the present where he now was, and to get such accounts of Bertha as he might in a roundabout way.

When Gassler went to the Good Hope neighborhood for his interview with Maggie he bore in his mind the vision of a sweet-faced, flaxen-haired child, whom, failing to take account of the intervening years, he expected to see there again, and his surprise was great when he saw departing from the house with Mr. and Mrs. Garrett a girl of adult stature.

"Yes, of course," he quickly said to himself. "Think of all these years. She couldn't be little always."

Still he felt a painful disappointment that the child, of whom he had so often fondly thought, was past childhood, and keenly regretted that she had made so fast and so far a progress in life without the slightest companionship with him. He had never heard a word addressed to him from her lips. He had touched her life but once and had then drawn forth only a scream of fright.

At the church, as she passed down the aisle, he stood, undiverted by anything, in full admiration of her beauty and in half-skeptical, self-congratulatory wonder that so lovely a being could have had an origin even partly in himself.

This was the vision he brought away, but it did not wholly crowd out the other, and by exercise of the imagination alone he added still another, that of an infant in arms. He was fond of occupying his mind with these, seeking thus to get a conception of Bertha's life in its continuity from babyhood until now, supplying from his own fancy a record inevitably lacking to his memory.

Hearing, after some time, that Rev. Charles Warner, the pastor of the Baptist church in this place, and who lived here, also had the charge at Good Hope, he improved the first opportunity to invite him into his shop, and without showing a particular personal interest, to engage him in conversation about the prominent families in his congregation north of the river. He soon learned all that the preacher had to tell about the Garretts, and fully agreed with him that it was a most interesting family.

Gassler plied him with questions about Bertha, making her singular situation, which the preacher had explained, the excuse for his curiosity, and he was pleased to learn from Brother Warner that she was universally regarded as a remarkably attractive and accomplished young lady. While, the preacher said, this was due in part to the advantages of her situation, yet her beauty and talents must have been natural endowments, and, since her mother was a very common sort of woman, it was thought that her father must have been a man of some superiority.

The preacher could see that Gassler was very much

pleased with this remark, but he took it only as evidence that he was a sympathetic listener, and thought no more about it.

"And if he had known," continued the preacher, "that he was to have so fine a daughter, I don't think he would have abandoned her mother and her, too, before her birth."

"Well, I reckon he wouldn't," said Gassler, as if such conduct were absolutely unthinkable.

"And, say," cried the preacher mischievously, "he must have been some tribesman of yours. His name was Crowell. Old Maggie's name is Mrs. Crowell. 'Fess up."

"Well, if they'll give the girl and the woman to any man of my name that'll claim 'em," said Gassler (who went by his real name at this place), "I'd better put in a bid, hadn't I?" And then, affecting a return from levity to seriousness: "Never heard anything about the feller in that part of the country, eh?"

"No," said Mr. Warner, shaking his head. "Nobody there knows anything about him. His wife completely lost him when he went off to the war. You were in the army, too, weren't you? Oh, I guess it's you."

"Does look as if you were makin' out a case against me, don't it? Well, to tell the truth, I wouldn't be a carin' much if you did if that girl's all you're crackin' her up to be. Woman never speaks of him?"

"Never heard her mention his name, or anybody else in that neighborhood," said Warner. "I don't



believe half the people up there know her name's Crowell. I had almost forgotten it myself. She's just simply Old Maggie."

"Well enough if he was that sort of a feller," said Gassler with a satisfaction which Warner observed but did not comprehend, for it arose from Gassler's assurance now that Old Maggie had not expressed her suspicion to anybody, since, if she had done so even a long time ago, thought he, the name of her husband would not yet be forgotten. And he was emboldened to press the point a trifle further.

"And that there robbery" (for he had been told about that, too), "they never got the least track of the fellers?"

"I never heard that they ever had a clue to any of them," said Brother Warner.

"You've got me right smart interested in that 'ere family," said Gassler, "and since you see 'em once a month or oftener you'll have to keep me posted on 'em or I'll have to move up there myself."

And after that, whenever the preacher returned from filling his appointment at Good Hope it would not be long before he was in the shoemaker's shop giving Gassler the latest news about the Garretts, and it so happened that the greater part of his report always had reference particularly to Miss Bertha Garrett, as naturally, indeed, there would be more to say about an engaging and talented girl, already maturing early into womanhood, than about the elder or the absent members of the family.

Noticing how frequently the preacher called at the shop of the shoemaker and how long, sometimes, he stayed, the people of the place wondered what hidden affinity existed between these diverse characters. But it was pleasing to both the righteous and the wicked, to the former because showing that their Christian teacher, like his divine Master, was condescending enough to consort with sinners, and to the latter as testifying that they must be pretty good company after all.

The two friends came to be spoken of as cronies, and so full and satisfactory were the reports that Gassler thus received of his daughter that he finally abandoned, as he believed, the intention of some day removing to the vicinity of the Old Plantation.

One day, just home from Good Hope, Brother Warner showed him a photograph of Bertha. He seized it from the preacher's hand and looked at it long and intently.

"Mighty fine lookin' gal," said he. "Fine as they make 'em. Guess you haven't stretched things any in talkin' about her."

And the preacher was astonished at seeing a tear in Gassler's eye—just a single tear that did not trickle, but all Brother Warner could see in it was that the shoemaker was emotionally impressionable to real womanly loveliness, and probably loveliness in any form.

Gassler begged to keep the picture.

"Oh, I couldn't let you have it," said Brother Warner. "Only one I have."

"But you can easily get another. They'll let a preacher have anything."

"But it would be unpardonable for me to give her photograph to a stranger. And what could I say to her?"

"Tell her you lost it."

And, overborne by persistency and intensity of importunity, Brother Warner, half fearing that Gassler, who still held the photograph in his hand, would go to the length of retaining it, by force, finally consented.

"Does look funny," said Gassler when Brother Warner came into the shop for the first time after the photograph had been placed there, "for an old man like me"—he was still under forty—"to have the picture of a big gal that I never see hangin' there, but, Mr. Warner, I jest couldn't help it—she's such a handsome gal."

But the youthful divine smiled only feebly at this explanation, and could hold no easy conversation with the shoemaker for jealousy. This was the beginning of a coldness between them or, rather, on Mr. Warner's part alone toward Gassler. The latter noticed the change very soon but could not account for it. Several times he tested Brother Warner to see if he was not mistaken, but the preacher would not respond to his friendly advances.

The preacher ceased coming to the shop, and when it chanced that he and Gassler met he never had time to exchange more than a few words. Gassler wondered what the reason might be. He supposed that perhaps

in their last extended conversation he had told some uncommonly coarse joke that was unpardonably offensive in the pious ear of the parson or that the latter had at length found himself degraded in the estimation of the elect by the frequency of his association with one so often profane and impure of word.

This painful relation between the two existed for several weeks and was happily reformed by the events of a "protracted meeting." Rev. Charles Warner made nightly raids into the domains of Satan, and one of his first captives was Gassler. In explaining it afterwards the cobbler said he believed it was all in the way the preacher said "the heavenly Je-rooz-alum."

"I couldn't help it," said Gassler. "I jest had to start for the place again."

And he was resolved this time to cast aside every weight. He would make a general confession of his sins in public, as he had done heretofore, and besides he would acknowledge to Brother Warner the big sin of his life. In doing so he would tell him also his relation to Miss Garrett.

This program he carried out, and was at first so well pleased with his performance that he insisted on being baptized again after the Baptist manner of immersion, though he had once before submitted himself to this sacrament, administered in the same way, at the hands of a Campbellite minister.

Brother Warner was, of course, astonished at the revelation made to him, and congratulated Gassler that he had at last relieved his conscience of so black



a secret. It may be that the joy the preacher felt should have been purely that which he might share with Heaven over a sinner that had repented, but nevertheless, he experienced an intense satisfaction on his own individual account, for there was no longer any reason for him to be annoyed because Bertha's picture hung on the rude wall of Gassler's shop in full view as he worked at his bench, and since Gassler had taken him into his confidence in his professional capacity as a spiritual adviser, he was moved to reciprocate with a confidence of an entirely personal character. So he told him that he hoped some day to make Bertha his wife. He further told him that he had not yet declared his love, she was yet so young; that there was plenty of time for that.

Meanwhile, he was contriving only that she should become well acquainted with him, and seeking only to prepare the way for her to love him. At this he flattered himself he was making good progress.

Gassler appeared to be greatly pleased with the prospect, though obviously indefinite, the preacher thus unveiled. For his part, he said, he didn't know what better any girl could do than become the helpmeet of a minister of the gospel. Surely it was exactly the fortune he would choose for a daughter of his.

Then the two conversed as to what would be Gassler's further duty in the matter of the great wrong he had done to Mr. Garrett. In this direction the preacher laid out no harsh road for the penitent and the future father-in-law to follow. He counselled

him that, since the crime had grown too old for the cognizance of the law, all that could remain were the moral acquitments. These were an acknowledgment of his wrong to the person wronged and a restitution of damages. But in this case the circumstances were peculiar. Gassler (or Crowell, as the preacher and everybody else yet called him) could not in his own proper name of Crowell go to Mr. Garrett and own his fault and ask forgiveness, without raising possible inquiries regarding his relation to Old Maggie, if not provoking positive information from her, that might work immense mischief to all the hearts in that household. And, if not this, it was quite likely that the identity and contrition of the robber, after all these years, would not compensate Mr. Garrett for the pain the robber's presence would cause, arousing again the specter of a wellnigh forgotten horror, reviving the old burning sense of the indignity.

As to restitution, it would have been well if Gassler could have clandestinely returned the stolen money; might be well if he could still do so, and yet in this respect had not circumstances made something like restitution for him? Were not his wife and his now dearly beloved daughter members of the Garrett family, the first in the very useful capacity of domestic and the second filling a void in the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Garrett that the death of their own daughter had left? And were not these relations on such terms as precluded a now yearning husband and father from returning to his own? After all, too, the amount

stolen was trifling when the wealth of the loser was considered. In ordinary cases a personal avowal of the wrong and full material amends were required by the moral law, but in this instance their omission seemed to be dictated by the wholly unusual circumstances.

Gassler was surprised at the leniency of the spiritual tribunal to which he had committed himself, for it had been his understanding that no lapses or waivers modified the operation of the moral statutes, and, though he felt a willingness to do some heroic penance, he was greatly relieved to be spared the shame and mortification of a personal acknowledgment to Mr. Garrett of his trespass and his identity.

The preacher was touched by the predicament of the unhappy man, thus now beginning to suffer from the forfeiture of all paternal rights and the lack of the least requital of belated but fervent fatherly affection, and he promised him he would do all he could to bring him into a personal acquaintanceship with his daughter if Gassler would be careful to abstain from showing by any sign his special interest in her. He assented to Gassler's plan, now revived, of going to the Good Hope neighborhood and living under the assumed name he had told Old Maggie he would go by, and the preacher said he would himself caution the woman never to break, through forgetfulness or surprise, the compact of secrecy into which she had entered.

In this situation Gassler might often see his child and occasionally converse with her. And when Brother

Warner should make Bertha his wife, possibly before, he would be in a position to prepare her for the knowledge of her true parentage, and so open the way at last for some sort of intimacy between her and her real father.

So satisfactory a prospect even as this had never been definitely outlined in Gassler's mind. He at once agreed to the condition imposed. Bertha was now at Granville to spend a school year in the seminary, and when she returned in the early summer she found by the side of the familiar rural postoffice a shoemaker's shop and a man gazing at her from the door whose stare had annoyed her at the church a year before.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### GASSLER'S STRIVINGS.

ON mail days, which were three in the week, Bertha usually went to the postoffice on her pony, and Gassler never failed to be on the look-out for her. When it was about time for her to arrive he would leave his shop and go into the postoffice where, as if tarrying after receiving his own mail or stopping to chat, he had an excellent opportunity to get a near view of Bertha and hear the sound of her voice.

She was conscious always that he was closely observing her and sometimes a glance at him would reveal to her an expression of pleasure and kindness in his face. Such conduct in a younger and more refined man might have pleased her vanity, of which, however, she had no larger a portion than any other comely young woman, but in a man apparently of the vulgar sort, a total stranger and of more than twice her own age it was offensive, and her resentment was deepened on her noticing that her glance never put him out of countenance, but he would look at her still as if hoping or expecting she would speak.

If Gassler was not at the postoffice his face would be seen at the door or window of his shop, with his eyes always on Bertha. Or if others happened to be standing outside the postoffice near the hitching posts

he would be among them. Once he offered to hold Bertha's pony while she went in for her mail, but she rejected his offer with no consideration at all and for the first time showed so plainly the contempt for him that had been growing in her mind from the first that the man could not mistake it. He retreated quickly to his shop. There could be no doubt that his daughter despised her unknown father, and he could not imagine why, unless an over-refinement, due to her bringing up in a wealthy family, caused her to look with disdain upon those in common or poor circumstances.

On the preacher's next visit to the neighborhood Gassler described Bertha's demeanor toward him with deep pain and discouragement, and the preacher, not knowing, of course, what Gassler's behavior toward Bertha had been, was at a loss to account for the girl's feeling.

But at church that day by observing Gassler throughout the meeting he obtained a hint of the cause, and after talking to Bertha at her home he fully understood the situation. For she entertained him with a description of "the new settler" and the annoyance she had suffered from his habit of undivertible staring.

Brother Warner promptly communicated to Gassler the solution of his perplexity, and the shoemaker was surprised that he had not himself perceived that the avidity with which he had improved occasions to look upon his daughter had carried him quite beyond the limits of good manners. He was relieved to find that her disdain was not due to her haughtiness, nor,

in the preacher's opinion, was it a discipline of Providence, and so he felt very confident he could correct her disposition toward him.

Gassler spent the following day in town, and on next mail day he was wearing a new suit of clothes, stiff linen shirt and collar, and was freshly shaved, for he had bethought him that it was important to present no physical repugnance to Bertha's eye. When his idol appeared at the office he was careful that she should see him and as careful not to look once in her direction.

For a time he was very resolute and successful in carrying out this policy, but at last, in the entire absence of the normal relation between parent and child, without a single one of the ordinary occasions of communication between them, and yet with a paternal love of belated growth becoming fonder each day and constantly yearning for some sort of satisfaction, Gassler unconsciously fell back into the old way of using practically the only avenue of cognition open to him—the visual sense.

He was perhaps more cautious and furtive in the use of his eyes than before, but not sufficiently so to keep out of Bertha's mind a constant and deep impression of his impertinence. Besides, he again took to being in the postoffice when she entered, so as merely to hear the sound of her voice as she exchanged commonplace or badinage with the postmaster or his wife, a contiguity which aggravated in her the sense of his espionage. The girl soon learned, too, to refrain

at such times from making any remarks in a light vein, for her feeblest attempt at humor was sure to provoke audible and unwelcome appreciation from the shoemaker.

The preacher was as good as his word, and strove quite valiantly in conversation with Bertha to exalt Gassler in her opinion, emphasizing the good traits in his character, and finding excuses for his manners in the rough life he had led, first in the army and then in the mining camp, and in his lack of home and family associations, but Bertha continued to speak of him as a boor. She described Gassler's conduct more fully and expressed her aversion more freely to Abner Garrett, who, however, treated the matter lightly.

"Why, I'd look at you that way, too," said he, "if I didn't have a chance to see you any oftener than he does. He thinks you are the loveliest girl he ever saw, and I think he's correct. No doubt it does him good to look at you. Pay no attention to him and let him look."

But she had a sentiment regarding Gassler which she did not express even to Mr. Garrett. It was not very definite in her own mind, but was akin to fear of him as having some sinister purpose toward her.

When Bertha went to College Hill in the fall she was therefore little less than startled one day at a sight of Gassler entering a shoemaker's shop which she presently learned was his own, recently opened with the intention of dividing his time between College Hill and the Good Hope neighborhood.



Here, by attending church and Sunday school in the college chapel, Gassler could see his daughter once a week and could hear her voice in song and her responses in class. He joined the adult Bible class, in which she sat, and so felt that at last there was one feeble visible bond between him and her. They were fellow pupils taking instruction in the Scriptures under the saintly tutelage of Prof. Bland.

In the chapel Gassler often turned to the person who was sitting next to him to praise Bertha's singing or her reply or remark of other character in class, and the admiring manner in which he invariably regarded her when within his view did not go without common notice, nor had he been at College Hill two months before it was recognized as his habit at all times, when talking with persons who had recently made Miss Garrett's acquaintance, to urge their assent to eulogiums of her which his own mouth freely uttered. And so it came to be whispered about with merriment that the shoemaker, silly old bachelor, was smitten with the indeed very interesting and attractive school girl from down the country.

Until her friends joked her on this account Bertha had never had it in her mind that Gassler's conduct might be interpreted as exhibiting an infatuation with her. If she could have fully accepted this explanation of his actions it might have relieved her of those indefinite suspicions of unknown purposes in him which she had herself formed and by which she was sometimes depressed. She did, indeed, occasionally

laugh with others over her "first conquest," but when her thought upon the subject was serious the fearful feeling that she was being shadowed by this strange man was as strong as ever.

She avoided him as much as possible. He had never received an introduction to her. Probably he had never thought about a formal introduction, but he improved the first opportunity that their attendance at the same Sunday school and in the same class afforded to speak to her. She allowed no light in her countenance as she recognized him with a slight and begrudged bow. Their salutations were not frequent, for Bertha was constantly on her guard to prevent them, and they did not improve in character of cordiality over the first exchange.

Privately the shoemaker felt Bertha's coldness to the center of his heart and at length grew discouraged in his attempt to cultivate an acquaintanceship of ordinary friendliness with his daughter.

Going once to Good Hope to meet Brother Warner when the latter had an appointment there, Gassler besought the preacher to give him leave to make known his identity to Garrett—which would not necessarily imply a revelation that he committed the robbery—and implore Garrett to grant him an unobstructed opportunity to openly persuade his wife and child to return to him. He thought it possible, once Bertha knew he was her father, that she might soon conceive a natural affection for him and for her real mother that would promote the reunion of the little family.

The preacher pronounced this but a dream. He again described to him Bertha's love for Mr. Garrett and Mr. Garrett's for her, saying that to disturb the girl's illusion and the sweet affections built upon it would be equivalent to bereaving a father of his daughter and a daughter of her father, and that instead of transferring Bertha's filial affection to himself he might be certain only of incurring her bitterest resentment.

It would be perpetrating upon Mr. Garrett an outrage worse than the robbery of years ago, and if, as might happen through Maggie's denunciation or otherwise, his connection with that affair were brought to light, the shadow of his disgrace would fall heavily on the very person whose character in all respects he should be most anxious to save from any hazard or reproach.

Brother Warner reminded Gassler again that, as he had no legal claims on his wife and daughter, so also he had no moral claims, and ought not to be selfish enough to desire to change in the least their happy situation. He urged him to discipline himself to patience and wait until the situation itself should be inevitably changed by time.

This counsel subdued Gassler's desperation, and he returned with the intention of abandoning special efforts to direct to himself a share of the smiles and pleasant words which Bertha had in varying measure for her acquaintances, or to secure an occasional friendly interview with his daughter. He had himself

been twitted with a fondness for Miss Garrett, exhibited with less reserve than a younger man would have sought to maintain, and it was judged from his comportment under such chaffing that it teased him as it might a boy. It did, indeed, grate upon him, but for reasons which his tormentors little imagined.

Sacred and vital as was his passion for his child, he could show it, then, only in such a way as made him the butt of jest!

He resolved that no longer should the tender, grave and noble ambition which preoccupied him, uncomprehended and unsuspected by others, furnish but material for ridicule. He was sick at heart. His mental state led him to be less careful than for some time he had been of his personal conduct, and the reports of his being often in the well-worn seats of the ungodly in the rear of one of the village stores or in the blacksmith shop, and of his having been in the company of those returning boisterous from the larger town caused the saints of the place to shake their heads gravely.

Gassler continued to attend church and Sunday school, which, in the opinion of the elect, was much in his favor, half scandalized though they were by it, for it showed that in his nature there was still protest against being led captive by Satan. The truth is that, while Gassler sometimes tarried long in conversation in the store of an evening, if he was not busy in his shop, he was in a mixed company of good, bad and indifferent, all of whom were managing somehow to



make their own living and none of whom had ever been in jail.

Gassler was successful in refraining in public from taking any notice of Bertha that might attract particular attention, but often, as she passed on one street or another in view from his shop (for from the shop one could see a large part of the village), he stealthily observed her through his window, and frequently at other times one looking in at the window might have caught the shoemaker fondly scanning a photograph of Miss Garrett which he had just taken from an old leathern pocketbook in his coat.

Bertha had a feeling of relief when Gassler's eyes ceased to be constantly turned her way on public occasions, and with a continuation of his indifference believed that the motive of his singular conduct, whatever it might have been, had lost its force, but she was troubled anew, a day after going home for the Christmas vacation of two weeks, to learn that Gassler had decided to spend the coming fortnight, or such a matter, mending the shoes of people in the Good Hope neighborhood. When the two weeks were past and Bertha had returned to school he "would be kept busier" at College Hill. He was apparently as indifferent to Bertha as of late he had been, but these coincident moves revived in her mind the unpleasant suspicion that he was keeping a watch on her.

Early in the school year Gassler and Jim Pressley had become acquainted. Jim liked to hear Gassler tell war stories as well as to listen to his interesting

conversation on common affairs. The youth was fond, too, of watching the shoemaker at his work, and he therefore often dropped in to sit for a while in the shop. Gassler was well pleased with his society and many a time felt flattered by the apparently lively interest shown in his views of affairs of all sorts by so bright and intelligent a young man. Pressley was one of those who were drafted by Gassler to fully agree to statements made by himself in praise of Miss Garrett, and the enthusiasm with which Pressley did so also contributed to his advancement in Gassler's esteem. Pressley believed that Gassler was foolishly infatuated with the girl until one day, when Gassler had been complimenting her and Pressley had been assenting, the shoemaker said with a twinkle in his eye:

"But no chance for you. I think she's spoken for."

"Who?" asked Pressley.

"Oh, I can't say who, but it's not me. I'm in love with her, but jest as a friend of the family, you know. I'm afraid, though, that she don't like me as well as she'd ought to."

And then Pressley concluded the shoemaker was, after all, only a friend of the family, but an unusually ardent and, as one might say, disinterested admirer of this particular member of it.

Pressley, too, had been thus far a disinterested admirer of Miss Garrett, as much so as any free youth of ordinary susceptibility can be of a fascinating young woman into whose society he is thrown, but late in the winter it was plain enough that he was seeking to

become, temporarily or permanently, the special beneficiary of her gracious attentions.

Gassler, affecting the listless manner of some gossips, made careful inquiry about this matter from students of his acquaintance as he met them, and observed for himself as well as he might whenever opportunity offered. Though he had never discussed with Brother Warner the progress of the friendship between the preacher and Bertha, he had supposed that of course the pastor knew exactly what he was about and had his tender enterprise all well in hand. It had never entered his head that there might be any reluctance on Bertha's part to put herself for life under such safe and saintly care as that of a minister of the gospel, and since Brother Warner's first announcement on the subject Gassler had considered Bertha as practically betrothed.

He was, therefore, not disposed to believe at first that the relations between her and Pressley would become more than very friendly, but the reports of others and his own limited observation convinced him ere long that Miss Garrett was acting as if her heart were still all her own, to be disposed of according to her inclination. She and Pressley were much together out of class at school. He was often her escort to the literary society or to an evening party, and when spring was come they took walks together on Sunday afternoons.

This might all be true without making Miss Garrett false to the preacher, if she were promised, but Gassler

feared his reckoning was wrong somewhere, and went to Good Hope next appointment day to compare notes with the minister. Perhaps the minister knew all about it.

But "Brother Charlie" knew nothing about it. However, he made light of it, yet he said that perhaps he had made a mistake in not definitely expressing to Bertha what was in his heart. He was sure, nevertheless, that she had divined it and would be fully ready to meet a plain statement of his affection. He would make it at the first opportunity and thus get the tender matter finally settled.

Gassler was disappointed at this revelation of the nature of the bond between Bertha and the preacher. That their marriage was waiting only for the completion of her education and her further maturity he had presumed with satisfaction, for he was relying on the preacher, one skilful in the use of influence, as he supposed, to turn the heart of the child unto the father, at present insinuatingly and with all the advantage possessed by a lover, and later to advocate his cause openly if need be.

If Bertha were to marry another it would be necessary for him to negotiate his important case anew while leaving with the preacher a dreadful secret which the jilted suitor would no longer have strong personal reasons for keeping covered and might through mere pique reveal. Were it not for this Gassler might be well pleased if Bertha chose Pressley rather than the preacher, for Gassler liked him better. He had found



him companionable, and there was a roundness, a vigor and wholesome spice to his character lacking to the preacher's. On the whole, he hoped the preacher's plan would not miscarry; yet, if the preacher were rejected for Pressley, then Gassler was resolved to give the young man the same facts and beg the same offices.

But he was soon grievously discouraged by the changed attitude of Pressley, which seemed now to have become the same as Bertha's, a circumstance due as Gassler held, to her influence and significant of the progress of the intimacy between them. Bertha's contempt he had thus far borne with no bitter sentiment toward her in return, but Pressley's coldness and slights he could not abide without inward resentment.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### HIS MASK OFF FOR GOOD.

As the weeks passed away the recurring incidents that might denote a serious mutual attachment between Pressley and his daughter put Gassler's mind into a strange state of vacillation. At times he was in a rage and wished the youth were in his presence so that he might berate him. At other times he found himself loving Pressley for Bertha's sake (granted she was really in love with him) and felt like taking an occasion to throw his arms around the young fellow and hug him.

One day, in incertitude and dismay, he would wish that the preacher might hurry and make sure of the prize. On the next he would feel as if he would like to surprise Pressley and Bertha together, raise his hands over them and say "God bless you both."

He had occasionally seen them together and at such times Bertha, he thought, looked prettier and sweeter than ever, which caused him even to dream of being bold enough some time to approach her and her lover, when thus she seemed most like an angel, and, telling her a secret long concealed, beg at last, though almost a stranger, as he must, his child's affection, or, if she could not at once grant that, to beseech her that at least, for nature's sake, she cease to despise him.

It was with a vague, timid intention to do this that he went into the graveyard where Bertha and Pressley were sitting, on a Sunday afternoon heretofore mentioned, and gave to Bertha a bunch of flowers. After he left, as has been told, Bertha tossed the bouquet away, and Gassler, noticing this as he looked back, returned, when they had left the cemetery, found the flowers on the grave of a child, and left them there—his own child's grave in symbol, for he felt that she, too, was dead, that as a little child he had loved her and laid her in the ground.

At last the preacher, observing how coldly Bertha received his suggestion of marriage when it was plainly communicated to her, told Gassler he believed that the attachment between her and Pressley must be genuine. An extraordinary effort must therefore be made to break it, when he might renew his own advance and, as he felt sure, with every prospect of success. To accomplish this object he believed effective means lay at hand in the peculiar relation existing between Bertha and her foster parents. Only those in the vicinity of the Old Plantation or those who had long known the family well were aware of the fact that Bertha was not actually a daughter. Even many who were fully informed respecting the affairs of the family at an earlier period regarded Bertha as what she passed for—a later child of the family—for among Mr. Garrett's neighbors there had been such deference to his well-known, earnest desire in recent years that nothing was ever said, except in small groups and then

guardedly, about the truth of Bertha's position in the household, and so well had even the children of the neighborhood been instructed that, while most of them knew who Bertha's mother was, not one of them ever pretended in Bertha's hearing to be wiser than she herself was on this point, except once, in her childhood, when a playmate in pique taunted her with not knowing her mother and almost gave the secret away.

At the same time, while the mixture of race in Mrs. Garrett was seldom mentioned, there was no lack of freedom in speaking about it when occasion arose. But this fact did not go abroad as formerly, and it was understood that no one should refer to it in Bertha's presence.

It was, therefore, the preacher's plan that Pressley should be informed by Gassler, as if it were a disagreeable but friendly act, that Bertha's mother was a colored woman. The preacher calculated that Pressley would be too gallant to catechize Bertha herself while at the same time he would make inquiries, with cautious diffidence, in fear of displaying his personal concern, with the sure result of confirming his information. Only by taking others fully into his confidence, which was not to be expected, would he find what alone would furnish him an escape from his predicament—the real truth about Bertha's parentage.

"Oh, no, let's not do that," said Gassler when the preacher had concluded. "It wouldn't be fair."

"It would be legitimate," replied the preacher with an air of shrewdness. "We are only rating the family at their own terms—conceding what they represent."



"They don't allow the old lady's colored, do they?" objected Gassler.

"No, but that is a patent fact that can't be ignored."

"Well, while we're concedin' all they reppizent, let's concede she's Creole or Indian—anything but black. Besides, I wouldn't tell the devil himself the lie that my own daughter's a nigger."

Gassler said this with such vehemence that the preacher turned pale.

"Saying so, of course, would not make it so," said "Brother Charlie," "and you would not be saying it of your own daughter exactly. You would be saying it so that she might sooner be your own daughter. You would be furthering the execution of the contract we entered into."

Gassler did have an agreement with the preacher. Perhaps it was a contract and bound him to do as he was told, besides, he was reluctant to possibly offend by disobedience the holder of his secret. So he was persuaded to promise that he would inform Pressley as the preacher had suggested. But he found it hard to fulfil the promise. His spirit revolted against his doing so unfair and mean a thing. He felt much more like calling Pressley into his shop and laying the whole truth before him, binding him not at present to break Bertha's illusion, and trusting that the young man's gratitude would impel him to promote as best he might the object that Gassler himself had most at heart.

Yet when the Fourth of July was come Gassler had done neither the one thing nor the other, and "Brother

Charlie," exasperated by the conduct of Bertha and Pressley on that day, was impatient with Gassler for his procrastination and insisted that without further delay he should "start the trouble," which Gassler, still afraid to rebel against the preacher, at last, as we have seen, awkwardly and bluntly did, and yet with such diffidence and timidity as to give Pressley the impression that it was not wholly through malice.

The next day Gassler packed his tools, his pegs, his lasts and his leathers and went to his Good Hope shop, bitterly ashamed of what he had done, being sure that he now deserved Pressley's contempt and with a remorseful sense of having done a wanton injury to that worthy young man as well as to his own daughter. He, however, experienced some feeling of relief a few days later when he learned that Pressley had spent a day at the Old Plantation.

"Why didn't we think of that?" thought Gassler. "He was sure to visit her home pretty quick and find it out for himself, anyway. He has found it out now an' much more 'an likely he'll think now that I was only speakin' to him out of friendship to put him on to something he'd ought to know."

Gassler wondered if Pressley had gone on invitation or had "just seemed to happen down," urged, by what Gassler had told him, to a speedy investigation.

"It was bound to happen, sooner or later, anyway," thought he, and now felt that, whatever might be the issue, it would be attributable not to his words but to the visit.

Yet he was scarcely made happier on this account, for, a little while later, when he knew that Bertha was mourning in her heart, his own grieved also. It was the father in him lamenting that anything had saddened his child. He did not, indeed, rate himself as the cause of her misfortune, but he repented that he had desired and contrived to invite it.

He could not follow with satisfaction the progress of her sorrow. He hardly ever saw her now. He would go to the preaching service in the country church, hoping in vain she might be there. She quit making her trips to the postoffice, and if he sometimes spoke about her with seeming indifference to others it was only to draw from them, possibly, some little bit of news or gossip concerning her. He hoped that Abner Garrett, who, he surmised, must be fully cognizant of the cause of her trouble, would remove it by permitting her and her lover to know the truth, and as time passed on and the girl's spirits showed no sign, so far as he could learn, of return to their wonted liveliness, he thought again of going to Mr. Garrett with a full revelation of the past, asking forgiveness for himself and mercy now for his daughter. He suggested this to "Brother Charlie," who shook his head.

"You would be far from doing her a service," said he. "She would rather lose Pressley as her lover than Garrett as her father."

At which Gassler was no less than jealous, his passion, for the time, being unmitigated by any appreciation of Garrett's loving kindness and inestimable beneficence

to the wife he had cast away and the child of whom he had not known.

The situation was all gone over again by him and the preacher, with the same result as before, and Gassler remained under the same dominion of argument and fear. The preacher could not reconcile Bertha's cheerful and animated disposition, as he observed it when in her company, with a love-sorrow that lay leaden on her soul, and did not, therefore, believe that her attachment had been so strong or her disappointment so deep as Gassler represented.

But just at this time occurred the death of Walter Garrett, an event which Gassler, while he was not wanting in common human sympathy, deplored chiefly because the grave decorum it imposed on family and friends would require, as he supposed, a suspension for many months of the amatory enterprise of the preacher, for he was not firmly assured by "Brother Charlie's" declaration that on the contrary the period of mourning might establish the best condition for the growth of Bertha's affection, since, as he put it, hearts sometimes see best into other hearts through tears.

After the shocking revelations so dramatically unfolded at the hour of Walter's burial, Gassler quickly left the little cemetery. He passed close by those who thought they had known him well, to whom he now seemed an utter stranger of terrible manner and words, and not a man spoke to him.

His face was burning. His eyes looked wild. People stood to one side for him to pass, and looked after him,



all in amazement, and many of them in fear, as he hastened away.

He went to his shop, pitched a few garments into a carpet bag, and set out for College Hill, walking still, as some said who saw him, like one mad.

After an hour or two a carriage in which was Prof. Bland overtook him. There was room for one more in the vehicle, and the professor with very grave and timorous kindness invited him to ride.

"No, no, I will walk," said the wretched man with great firmness. Noting well the manner of his reply and his air of distraction, the professor did not repeat the invitation.

Gassler was, indeed, wellnigh mad. No one was more astonished than himself at the events of the afternoon. That a mighty flood of anger should have submerged all sense and judgment!

That at last, after years of reserve and control, he should have announced Bertha's parentage to her tauntingly and with upbraiding!

That his old crime should be proclaimed where his mere presence under the circumstances was an outrage scarcely less flagrant.

That he should have shocked both Heaven and earth by profaning so sacred and solemn an hour with an oath. All this deranged his mind with remorse and despair. As he walked along heedlessly in the growing darkness he wept and groaned and cursed again in turn.

Pretty father, he! Likely that Bertha would be glad to give up the sedate, the gentle, the benevolent,

the reputable Mr. Garrett, and own him, the vagabond shoemaker, the ruffian, the swearer at graves, the highwayman as her father. She would never recognize him now. She was wholly out of his future, which looked black indeed with shame and disgrace and with the contempt of everybody.

He loathed himself. He loathed his life. He was himself more dissatisfied with it than anybody else could be. He knew that in no act would he be more himself than in repudiating it before all the world. Would that not rightly secure him some pity and sympathy? He thought of himself as like the man in the hymn, on a raging sea in a foundering bark, wind-tossed, rudely blown, and in the dark.

On reaching College Hill long after dark, he went directly to the boarding house, traversed the hall and knocked at the door of Prof. Bland.

The professor had been for some time sitting by his fire, still in a state of high excitement on account of the remarkable events of the day, though wearied by unwonted travel and exposure in the chilly air. As he opened the door he was much struck by Gassler's abject appearance, and might have been alarmed, after bidding him come in, at finding himself alone with him, had he not observed that his face was tear-stained, reassuring proof that softer passions had been stirring in his breast than those that made the moments at the graveside so horrible.

"The 'Star of Bethlehem'!" exclaimed Gassler, looking with desperate earnestness at the professor.

The utterance was a pleading groan that just reached the definiteness of articulation. The professor did not at first understand that it was a request.

"Sing 'The Star of Bethlehem,'" said Gassler.

Professor Bland realized now that he had heard the cry of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and began singing the hymn in a low voice, so that it would not be heard through all the house. When he had come to the end of the third stanza;

Once on the raging seas I rode.

The storm was loud, the night was dark.

The ocean yawned, and rudely blowed

The wind that tossed my foundering bark,

Gassler was sobbing and the old singer was so deeply moved that his voice trembled as he proceeded, but became firm, clear and triumphant as he reached the lines:

But suddenly a star arose—

It was the Star of Bethelam,

and so he continued to the end.

"Sing it again," said Gassler.

And once more the professor sang it with deep feeling arising from a new appreciation of its power as illustrated in the particular case of the distressed penitent before him.

Those in the rooms adjoining or close by had heard some one come in and be admitted to the professor's apartment, and they were surprised when soon the professor began to sing. They supposed at first some question had arisen as to the hymn between him and

his caller or that he was singing it as a pious relief to his mind from oppressive reflections on the awful incidents of the day.

But even through intervening walls the low tones of his voice presently carried with them the evidence of singular earnestness and intensity of emotion, and listeners then felt that the singing was really a serious work of grace and that the visitor, whoever he might be, had sought the professor's room as a sanctuary.

When the professor had concluded, Gassler, who had by this time become more composed, said:

"Professor, you are too good for me to ride with. That's the reason I didn't get in. I was too ashamed of myself. That was awful this afternoon. But what I said was right. She is my daughter. Only I hadn't ought to say it that way. And what she said was right, too. I did it. Seems as though they remembered my scarred hand. Yes, I did it. But I ain't any better suited with my life 'an anybody else is. I hate it worse 'an anybody. If I do, then I'm not as bad as if I liked it. And I want people to know I hate it. I want to square myself with the world.

"I'll own up to it all. I wore a mask on the night of the robbery and 'pears to me as if I'd been wearin' it ever since, but it's comin' off now and comin' off for good. I'd ha' done it before this if I hadn't been advised not to, though I 'low I didn't want to. But I liked that girl so as I wanted to get things squared up. I've tried to live without squarin' 'em up, but I can't.



"I wouldn't ha' cared at things comin' out today if I hadn't ha' told my daughter she was stuck up, and got mad and swore right there at the buryin'. I reckon she'll never like me now. People won't like my life, now as they've found out what I did, but I don't like it, either, and it's goin' to be something different from this time on.

"Pressley's goin' to know her mother ain't a darkey, and then he'll love her ag'in, maybe, and they'll be happy. He'd be lots better for her than the preacher. As I was walkin' along I didn't know what to do till you ketched up with me, and then the sight of you made me think o' 'The Star of Bethlehem,' and I had to come right here to hear ye sing it."

And there in that plain abode of peace, refinement and the virtues, the shoemaker made the professor his confessor, as he had made the preacher some time before, but adding to his grievous statement a chapter covering his efforts to form an acquaintance with his daughter and his conspiracy with Brother Warner to spoil the match between her and Pressley.

Prof. Bland listened with great interest and sympathy to the plain tale, congratulated Gassler on his disgust with what was evil in his past, expressed confidence in his ability to make future conduct testify to better character, and expressed the hope that he would yet gain such recognition from his daughter as would not leave his paternal yearnings wholly ungratified.

Gassler spent the night in the little room in the rear

of his shop, and the next morning before the village was awake he was on his way afoot to the Old Plantation to beg the forgiveness of Mr. Garrett and, if he could see her, of his child.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### FICTION AND FACT.

NEITHER Bertha nor Abner Garrett slept a moment on the night of the day when Walter's remains were laid finally away in the little home cemetery.

The girl was part of the time lying, part of the time sitting, in her bed; now in tears, now in a distraction too fearful for tears, thinking of the great change the day had wrought.

What a transformation of persons, herself included! Two who had stood nearest moved—she could not yet tell how far, but a distance, away. One who had stood a little apart, brought close, and one, who had stood afar off and whose face she hated, also brought near, even to her side! And all wearing new faces!

And her lover—no gulf now between her and him, but a plain space, over which, however, since there had been a gulf, could they now approach each other?

And this dear old place which she had always loved as home was become just so strange as to make her homesick. Homesick, then, for a home—where?

Nowhere in all the world.

Lying in the room which since she was a little girl had been hers, yet homeless and parentless. A situation that did not seem real, yet too real to be a dream.

Garrett, lamenting anew the loss of his son, was

grieving also almost as for another Julia dead, and regretting the cruelty with which Bertha's illusion had been dispelled. Nor did he omit to reproach himself with being the author of the catastrophe in having selfishly established the condition that made it possible. He sat by the fireplace or reclined on the lounge, without undressing, all night. As had before been the experience of his mind, this new trouble was accompanied by the whole familiar troop of old ones, and by still another, which, neither new nor old, was becoming more serious every day.

He had never been able to make the income from his capital sufficient to offset the family expenditures. His sons had spent money like princes. The amounts they called for increased instead of diminishing as they grew up to be men.

Walter, after spending heavily all through his college course and in the following years at various unremunerative employments, had recently required thousands of dollars to fit up a home and office in New Orleans.

Dan had taken thousands more in the building of his boat, which was not being operated profitably, and thousands more would soon be necessary to prevent the foreclosure of a mortgage on the steamer.

Abner Garrett, himself, though inclined to no extravagance on his personal account, had always been proud to furnish luxuries of all sorts to his family, while as an agriculturist he seldom managed so that the returns from his fields were more than large enough to pay



the cost of cultivating and maintaining and embellishing the Old Plantation. The result now was that such part of his former fortune as was not really had become exhausted, and he was reduced to a reliance upon his acres alone, a prospect which caused him much misgiving.

When Gassler arrived early in the morning at the Old Plantation mansion Mr. Garrett met him at the door.

"Mr. Garrett, I want to speak to you alone," said Gassler.

Gassler presented a sorry appearance, wearied with foot travel and loss of sleep, and showing in his face an excitement that disregarded any of the ordinary demands for physical rest.

Mr. Garrett surveyed him with grave surprise. Then, still standing at the door, he said:

"Proceed. I am the only one up."

"I wish I had told you long ago," began Gassler. "I've been ashamed enough of it. I was one of 'em. I was the feller that stood over you. An' then's when I got the first sight o' the little girl. Might seem as if I wouldn't care, but I did. An' when I seed the kind of folks we'd come to I wanted to back out right then, but I didn't durst to. I knowed the other fellers wouldn't stand it. An' so we went ahead, but I can tell you it wa'n't a nice job for me. I'd heared that she an' a baby she had was took up north by some rich man, an', tell the truth, I didn't care then, only was glad they'd got into good hands, an' I never

calkilated to see 'em again; but when I see the little girl there on your porch I knowed it was her, an' 'pears like all the love I'd ought to been doin' since she was born began on me right then, an' it kept increasin', though I couldn't see her. An' when she screamed there through bein' afeared o' me an' thinkin' somebody was goin' to be hurt I tell you it took me up a mighty lot."

Gassler moistened his lips with his tongue, as if to accelerate his confession, then proceeded hastily:

"Well, I wanted to send back all the money. I told the other fellers you wasn't the kind of people we'd ought to do a thing o' that kind on. We was a lot of old rebels as thought we hadn't got quite as much out o' the war as we'd ought to. But they wouldn't hear to sendin' it back, so I couldn't get it from 'em.

"I knowed I was held to you fer the hull amount we stole an' I'd thought o' tryin' to get it back to you, but I was afeared to do it fear I'd be found out, an' a feller I talked to said I'd better not, an' besides I held it a little ag'in' you that you was holdin' o' my wife and child so as there was no chance fer me to get 'em back without makin' a bad mess o' the whole thing, an' mebbe I couldn't get 'em anyway.

"That's the reason I been hangin' around here last two years—jest to see my daughter. Thought I might get on speakin' terms with her without her knowin' who I was an' see her at churches an' so on, but she jest took a dislikin' to me from the start 'parently. Can't blame her much, but it went hard

with me when I was lovin' her all the time. I see Maggie an' sounded her, but she wouldn't hear to comin' back to me, an' I knowed you'd adopted Bertha, an' the way seemed pretty well hedged up to me.

"I jest got mad in the graveyard, that's all. My temper got away with me. I couldn't stand things any longer. It was an awful thing to do. I'm sorrier fer it than anybody, an' I came here to ask yer forgiveness fer it an' fer the robbery an' the hull business. I'm tired livin' the way I've lived. There's the past. No help fer it, but the future's goin' to be different.

"I don't want Bertha to leave you. I don't allow she can ever think much of me, but I wish I could be on speakin' terms with her. Mebbe she'll come that fur after while. An' there's nothin' now standin' in the way of her marryin' Pressley. I told him her mother was a wench jest to throw him off the track 'cause another feller wanted her. I want yer forgiveness fer that, too. I want to own up to everything, an' as fer the money, why, I've had no one but myself to take care of, an' here's the nine hundred dollars. Now, won't you fergive the hull thing?"

Gassler offered Garrett a roll of bills.

Without taking the money, the planter invited Gassler, who all this time had been standing outside the open door, to come in and sit down.

"I do forgive you," said Garrett when they were seated, "and I forgive you the money too. I don't want it. You have paid all debts you owe me by

saying what you have just said. I hope you have entered on a new life. I trust nothing will divert you from it. I also hope you will in time get the recognition from your daughter you desire. I shall tell her what you have told me, but for the present, until her mind has had time to change, if it will change, I think you had better not seek to bring yourself to her notice. She has two fathers. She just now feels as if she had none. I had two daughters. I lost one. I now feel as if I had lost the other. And you loved her?"

Mr. Garrett asked the question as if musing. The other bowed his head; yet there was pride even in his shame.

"I was late, too late, beginnin' to feel like a father toward her," he moaned, "but when I see her an' got to thinkin' she was my own daughter, my own child, my heart commenced warmin' up an' got gettin' warmer all the time. I thought better o' Maggie, too, when I see she was the mother of such a child."

A sudden thought set the kind lines of Abner Garrett's face into sternness.

"You said you tried to throw Pressley off the track because some other person wanted Bertha," he inquired. "Did he know what you told Pressley?"

"Yes, he put me on to tellin' of him."

"May I ask who that was?"

"It was Brother Warner. He allowed it would be better fer me if he married her."

"He knew, then, you were her real father?"



"Yes, I told him all about myself when I got religion two years ago over in Kentucky. But I didn't keep it. I've got religion before and didn't keep it. I couldn't keep it an' my secrets both. Now I've got rid of my secrets, an' I'm goin' to keep my religion."

"I trust you will," said Garrett, rising from the chair, which Gassler correctly interpreted as an intimation that the interview was ended.

"Think as kind o' me as you can," said he in leaving.

"I will," was the reply.

Gassler immediately set out on his return to College Hill. He met a few of his acquaintances as he left the neighborhood. They stopped as if they would speak with him, but he passed on, saying to each of them in turn:

"I've been over to the Old Plantation, told him everything, an' asked his fergiveness fur everything."

That day "Brother Charlie" called at the Old Plantation. Mrs. Garrett treated him with customary consideration, but he observed a deportment in Mr. Garrett which he would have been glad to be assured was only abstraction due to grief. He felt, however, that while his old friend eyed him coldly so did he also reproachfully.

"Brother Charlie" asked, with the latitude commonly allowed spiritual physicians in time of stress, if he had not better "have a word with Bertha."

"I don't believe she would desire to see anyone today," said Garrett in a manner that seemed almost stern.

"Brother Charlie" never received another invitation to the Garrett home. He never afterward saw any member of the Garrett family in his congregation. He ventured to call a few times on the standing invitation he held as pastor, but the former hospitality was not extended. Abner Garrett, however, governed the conduct of his wife and Bertha toward the preacher merely by the expression of his wishes without giving further reason therefor than to say he had heard things which left no doubt in his mind that Mr. Warner was not a sincere man nor a true friend of the family. He was not pressed to be more explicit. It was not the first time that he had thus given direction to family policy while making it understood that his motive must not be the subject of exacting inquiry.

As soon as "Brother Charlie" learned that Gassler had had an interview with Mr. Garrett he speculated with great misgiving as to whether or not any of his own confidences with the shoemaker had been held back. He hoped in vain to see Gassler at his local shop, and a few months later, convinced that the change in the disposition of the Garretts was permanent, he made a trip to College Hill to ask Gassler if he had divulged his secret counsel to Mr. Garrett. Gassler told him the facts of the matter, and soon afterward "Brother Charlie" retired from the pastorate of the church.

As a branch torn from its tree by tempest might feel, if it had sensation, so Bertha felt after the recent rude wind of circumstance had blown upon her. It

seemed to her that all vital connection between herself and the family of which she never mistrusted she was a part was broken asunder, and her spirit was prostrate and helpless.

Instead of the cherished child of the affection of a dear father and mother, she had been living, then, but in a friend's house. The love given and returned was only make-believe. The threads of gold that bound their hearts to hers and hers to theirs were but tinselled sham. The warmth of love was not from life but from an artifice. In the exchange of what is most precious in being she had been the victim of fraud. The truth which, beginning before she could remember, in her baby heart, she had held the dearest in the world, was now converted at a word into a fiction.

The changing consciousness of the girl continued to bewilder her. Every object she beheld, however familiar all the surroundings were, was imbued with a quality of remoteness. "Ours," even "mine," had to give place to "theirs," as in the house of some stranger, and it may be hard for one to imagine how deeply affected she was when, looking, say at the parlor table cover, she realized that she had lost a joint-proprietary interest in it and held only that of a pensioner.

Bertha's mind could make no progress toward anything like a practical adjustment of itself to the knowledge that Gassler and Old Maggie were her parents. For Old Maggie, indeed, she had always

had a warm affection such as her fervent nature would have conceived for any other woman with whom she had been on like terms of intimacy and from whom since infancy she had received like loving kindnesses, but by no process could this long formed affection, even though maternal in its counterpart, be now transmuted into the superior gold of filial love.

Sometimes, impelled in part by conscience, in part by personal pride, Bertha found herself seeking to invest Gassler with a more worthy character than she had hitherto allowed him. In this she was assisted with suggestions adroitly made from time to time by Mr. Garrett. In light of the fact that Gassler's interest in her had been a fatherly one she could condone to some extent the purely personal annoyances she had suffered from him, but the deeper impression he had made on her mind was little changed. The harsh details of her mental images of him as desperado and desecrator were not softened.

Gassler and Old Maggie—too late now to make these two persons over into parents! Bertha could, indeed, conceive she was descended from them, but her feeling in this respect, as nearly as it can be described, was that they were ancestors, separated from herself by some vague intermediate generations.

At the same time Bertha found it was no use trying still to hold Mr. and Mrs. Garrett in her heart as father and mother. They had inevitably receded from her, and, with the dissolution of the bonds of natural affection, she indulged the melancholy license of



applying to these two persons a more critical consideration than her sentiments as a daughter would ever have allowed her to exercise.

Once more she tried to look through Pressley's eyes, and this time with more freedom, if she chose, to concede the verity of his view. Perhaps there had been another well-kept secret in the family. She recalled that those questions she had asked as a child, and even in later years, about the childhood of her supposed mother were never directly answered and that she was soon diverted from them. But now she asked Abner Garrett point blank:

"Was Pressley right in thinking there was colored blood in my mother—in Mrs. Garrett?"

She was almost sorry, for he quailed as if one had struck him a blow.

"Can you not see for yourself, child?" he answered.

"See that there is or is not?"

"Can you not satisfy yourself?"

"It seems to me there might be."

"She says not."

"But do you not know positively? What do you think?"

"I do not allow myself to know or to think beyond what she says."

"Then Pressley was right."

As the whole matter revolved itself in Bertha's mind, she rated her prime affections, tender and ardent as they had been, fictitious save one. Her lover had been her lover and her love for him had alone been

genuine. Was it still not possible to save this? If he only knew, would not this lead to the union of their hearts again?

She was not sure, but she wished he knew.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### RESTORATION—AND EPILOGUE.

PRESSLEY was a student this year at Franklin College. One day in March he received a letter addressed in a strange hand, but bearing the familiar postmark of College Hill. It was from Gassler, short and laboriously composed. With orthographical revision it may be reproduced as follows:

I'm no hand at writin', so excuse how short this is goin' to be. I allowed you might not find out and I wanted you to know is the reason I have for writin'. It turns out Bertha is not the daughter of Mr. Garrett and his wife. She's adopted. Her parents is white folks. I knowed this all the time, which don't excuse me for tellin' you she had darkey blood, which God forgive. I ask your pardon for it, too. I tell you so you can act accordingly if you want to, and I wish you would.

Pressley's eyes were moist before he raised them from the page, in joy that the way might yet be open for him to follow the leadings of his heart; in compassion for her to whom he had been needlessly cruel; in pity of himself that he also had suffered.

"I knew it could not be so," said he bitterly to himself. "I knew it could not be so. Then why did I act as if it were? I knew she was bred an angel, and when she came into my heart why did I thrust her out? Why did I not give myself to her as she

gave herself to me? Why did I pretend to find a blemish on her and fling her away?"

Thus his thoughts ran on in tenderness toward her and in contempt of himself.

He would hurry to her, if she would let him, and confess his own abasement, his own meanness. It would be in shame and manifold contrition, and if she only would, if she only could, forgive him, if the same old, free, unmixed light of love was in her eyes, he would be happy again.

He lost no time in mailing a note to Bertha. "May I come to you?" it asked only. In a few days a thrice blessed "yes" was received, and Bertha had added:

"Mrs. Garrett has never been informed of your opinion respecting her."

How truly, thought Jim, she had anticipated his feelings and how considerately she had saved him embarrassment by telling him that Mrs. Garrett had never been told the reason for his conduct.

He took the train for Madison. His information implied a mystery over which his mind could not cease to exercise itself. What could have happened? If Mr. and Mrs. Garrett were not her parents, who could her parents be? The girl at once began to be dreamily strange to him, and the reflection startled him that there he was speeding on to a reunion with a sweetheart whose real name he did not know.

He felt he would be better prepared to present himself at Bertha's home if he could only learn something further regarding the enigma, and he suddenly decided



to stop at College Hill and see Prof. Bland, so, instead of proceeding directly to Madison, he got off at Dupont. He had sometimes done this before, when going home, just to pay his friends at the Hill, and especially Prof. Bland, a visit.

It was quite dark when, afoot, he had reached the stoniest part of the road running from Dupont to College Hill. From an eminence behind he had already seen the lights in the boarding house, and was satisfied when he made sure that one of them was shining from Prof. Bland's window.

At length he found himself at the boarding house door. It was a portal which for old acquaintance' sake he was privileged to open without knocking. Going the length of the hall, he tapped on Prof. Bland's door and was bidden to enter.

"Once more the wayfaring youth is welcomed to the hermit's cell," said the professor, leaning forward in his chair to grasp Jim's hand.

"You a hermit? Why, no; you like mankind too well."

"But hermits are ever kindly to youth. Yes, James, a good deal of a hermit, not of choice, but of necessity, a sometimes hard necessity, for you know it is a labor for me to get about. Even to rise to greet my friends is a task so slow that in the doing it loses all grace of compliment."

"But is it not the better action in a master simply to sit? Kings' words need no gesture. It is only the utterances of common men that need the emphasis of

motions, and the most regal hail is the welcome merely spoken."

"No master and no king, James, but, if you will, your etiquette would not hold between two royalties."

"Will you not let me give you your proper rank?"

"Not if it puts a grade between us."

"Well, we are met and well met for me, and surely if it lacked ceremony we have by after argument made it ceremonious enough, for we have crowned two kings protesting against their own investiture."

"And now that it is done, let's have a revolution and depose us both; keeping the truer nobility of commoner men, showing how we despise a sovereignty not shared by all republicans. Better for the land of Washington and the commonwealth of Indiana—poor country for a heraldry and for the growing of that crop of weeds that blossom into crowns. But we began wrong, James. I have been thinking much about you lately, and was never so glad to have you come. I knew those were your footsteps in the hall."

"And I had a special object in coming. Until I got on the train I had not thought of dropping by this way. But what was your special desire to see me?"

"I believe you know it already. I was not sure that you would hear of the matter. Go down there, James. If things can be fixed up it will be a blessed mending.—But have you heard what's been going on?" asked the professor, suddenly reflecting that he might have presumed too much, "or have you of yourself changed your mind?"

"All I know was contained in a short note that I got from Mr. Gassler. He said that Mr. and Mrs. Garrett were not her parents."

"Oh, then it will be all right, and while it is through a great trial to Bertha, you are both to be congratulated. It is something that ought to have been told her long ago, and then it would not have been so hard. James, be as diplomatic as you can when talking to Mrs. Garrett. Beware the fury of 'a woman scorned.'"

"She has known nothing about my motives," said Jim, "if that is what you mean. Bertha told me that."

"Ah, then, so much the better. You will no doubt be received gladly by them all."

"But what has happened?" asked Jim. "I came expressly to see if you could tell me, so that I would not need to go to Bertha's home so much in the dark. How is it? Who are her parents?"

"Gassler didn't tell you that? She is an adopted daughter without knowing it until now. You have heard her speak of Old Maggie?"

"Yes."

"Old Maggie is her mother, and her father is Mr. Gassler, though Gassler is an assumed name. His real name is Crowell."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Jim, starting in his chair. "When did it become known, and how?"

Prof. Bland then told him all about the funeral.

"Strangest thing I ever heard in my life," was the best way the young man could express his mightily wrought up and mingled feelings.

The professor then narrated to him the Garrett family history and repeated Gassler's story as the shoemaker had given it.

"Explains it all," said Jim.

The young man excused himself for a moment to go to the matron to speak for a bed. She asked him why he looked so frightened. He laughed at her for what he called her notion.

"It invigorates me to come in contact with somebody who has been traveling," said Professor Bland to Jim when he returned. "I feel as if my windows were up and fresh air were coming in; as if I were a stagnant pool stirred by the inflowing of a running stream. When one has been making a railroad trip I always fancy he brings with him what I may call the scent of activity, the odor of bustle and movement. It's good to get such things as that into my old room sometimes. If I should get a new book I suppose I should feel that it brought up a little the dates of all the others on my shelves. I mean, brightened them a trifle."

"I know it does a young man good to get into this room now and then," said Jim. He was much interested in these references of the professor to himself. He was surprised at them, for they were opening up recesses in the old man's heart which he supposed had long been closed for all time. He had never before that night heard Prof. Bland say a word, except in the most indirect way, about his loneliness or seclusion, about any of his belongings, his books or anything else being old.



Everything he had was old. The backs of half his books showed pits and furrows where worms had held their banquets. Some had no backs, and all their leaves had the yellow which is the gray of books. His cane and crutch were worn and bruised, and seemed as if once they might have had an infant stature and grown up and aged with the frame they supported. His clothes bore the gloss of the smoothing iron of time.

But Prof. Bland was simply wishing he were youthful and handsome and standing in the young man's place.

"I feel as if I had travelled a long way," said Jim. "In fact, it seems to me that I have come into another world."

"I might have saved you most of your trouble if I had only told you in the first place the secret that has now come out," said the professor, "and I was more than once strongly tempted to trust that you would never let Bertha know, and do so, but I could not. I felt that somehow I would be violating Bertha's confidence, and I could not be sure that you would be better pleased to have her the child of those who are really her parents than of those who you supposed were."

"Oh, as to that, I wish Mr. Garrett were still her father. He must be a thousand times the man Gassler is; and I suppose, compared as individuals, Mrs. Garrett is far superior to Old Maggie, but there is the fact of her race. Do you still think that Mrs. Garrett is fully white? You say she was a slave."

"I never thought she was white."

"But you told me once, when I asked you, that she surely was, though from all I saw and heard I could not believe it."

"No, James, you asked me if I thought there was any negro blood in Bertha's mother."

"Yes."

"I told you no."

"Well?"

"But which mother did you mean, and which did I mean?"

"Oh, I see," said Jim quietly.

"It was a truth you could see but one side of, but, as I said, I could not tell you that, and could but leave the words with you, hoping the assurance I thus gave might blind the eyes of a love that I could not make to see all, and that, so far as it was seeing, was seeing wrongly. And, besides, I was then informed only by my own observation as to just what the relation was between you and Bertha, and I could not on what was, after all, a presumption, hazard the revelation of which we have been speaking."

Pressley was by this time beginning to be absorbed with reflection on what he had just heard and on how far the facts had left him out of their confidence in the most important matter of his life, and he was disposed to be silent. The professor, also, was inclined this way, half mistrusting whether he had prudently proceeded to the extremity in this matter whither his sympathy for his two young friends had led him.

But they fell to talking about everyday affairs, school matters and small current events, and thus ended the evening in common sociability.

After that the young man needed common sleep, but the chords of his being had been set vibrating by rare influences, and the subtle fingers kept at work, playing more and more, as consciousness became beguiled of judgment, a fantastic medley of all airs from a ditty to a dirge.

The next morning he was early out of the village, and on to Good Hope.

Good Hope! In the name, as it proved, lay a revival, for final fulfillment, of the promise formerly read therein by the now returning lover. Love presided over the court instituted for a review of his conduct, and a plenitude of mercy was shown which, though he craved it all, he could not accept without some protest in his heart.

Pressley found no indictment against him save the mere record of what Bertha had suffered, as it came from the trembling lips of the girl herself, yet this was harsh enough to bow down his soul in utter abjection. She was not otherwise his accuser, but on this recital he based a self-arraignment of which he felt strict justice could give him no acquitment and from which a pardon, through grace alone, could absolve him.

"Forgive you?" Bertha repeated. "I had already done so in my heart."

All the motives and emotions that had tortured

these two hearts for the last ten months were reviewed by both together. They were, indeed, in part re-felt in the effort to express them in words, and tears compelled many a pause.

Pressley did not make excuse, nor did Bertha suggest it was required, for the action to which he had felt himself forced by the facts as he understood them to be. The cardinal fault with which he reproached himself was that, even against such opposing testimony, he had not held to the uttermost the faith love had bidden him hold.

After they had been long together, and as they stood with their arms about each other, both their faces lighted by a love that had survived throughout, but now clear of clouds, Bertha thus summed up the inquisition:

"All for a mistake! Yes, you made a mistake, but it was founded on one which I had been making all my life. No, I didn't make it. It was made for me and I grew up in it. Nor did you make your mistake, Jim. It was made for you. Two mistakes. Mine had to carry yours. With mine gone yours is gone."

And then to both returned the vision of the little heaven on earth they so fondly contemplated, as clear now as then, and nearer, and never to vanish again.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bertha continued to call Mrs. Garrett her mother, but, as time passed, her conduct toward Old Maggie,



on the long visits that she and Pressley made every summer, became more and more of a filial character, though never without reserve. As if to supply, as far as possible, what was inevitably lacking in this particular, after the diversion of Bertha's affection from the natural course, Pressley treated Old Maggie with a respectful, cordial and constant attentiveness which often confused while it gratified her.

A dearer compensation was hers in the full abandonment of Bertha's children, first one, then two, and then three, to her care and company on these summer visits at the old home. Two grandmas here, they told the little ones, and Old Maggie could not reproach herself for her jealousy of them nor for a distinct feeling of satisfaction on perceiving, as she thought, that of the two grandmas she herself, handicapped as she was, was the favorite. Nor did she fail to discern gratefully that Pressley interested himself to promote this friendship.

Pressley performed a like good office for Gassler. Soon after Bertha and Jim were married and went to Indianapolis Gassler followed and opened a shoemaker's shop in that city. When Bertha had learned about all his yearning for her, her heart softened somewhat toward him, so that she was able to think of him with indifference and even bear his infrequent presence in her home. His whole story had created a great deal of sympathy for him in Jim's heart, and the young man sought to facilitate an intercourse, limited as it must be at best, between the

man and his daughter's children that might even in a slight measure make up to Gassler the grandfather what Gassler the father had too late come to long for.

Pressley and the children often dropped into the cobbler's shop, where, though the little people ransacked shelves and cubby-holes and handled all the curious things there at will, yet were they not complained of as meddlesome. Gassler, too, might often have been seen at a few minutes of sport with them in their own yard or on the walk in front, and friends used to wonder why it was that on Sunday afternoons in pleasant weather the shoemaker so often took the young lawyer's children for an outing in the parks or some near rural spot, for at Bertha's wish, conveyed by her husband, Gassler kept his relationship to her unknown, but he was allowed to play "uncle" to the children. Their parents had but one anxiety respecting their intimacy with their fond friend, and that was lest his ever-ready indulgence of them in sweetmeats might at any time be followed by physical pains and penalties.

Abner Garrett did not live long enough by a year to witness the marriage of Bertha and Pressley. He suffered no malady well enough defined for the doctors to give it a name. He only grew paler and more melancholy to the end. Mrs. Garrett preserved a broken looking-glass as that which had been the visible prophecy of his demise.

And, as the years went by, the Old Plantation—

home and acres—became but a faded and mutilated copy of what it had been in the days of its simple splendor, and there was no one to wonder if the fates were done with it now.

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SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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